

La Route de(s) Flanc(s):

**"Femme lisse exhalant la senteur
immobile de la terre"**

- A Study of Sexuality in Claude Simon's Novels -

**A thesis submitted in partial
fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of**

Master of Arts in French

in the

University of Canterbury

by

J.L. Dudman

University of Canterbury

1990

Contents

Abstract	II
Abbreviations	III
Introduction	1
Foreword	1
Language pertaining to 'sexuality' - description	3
Simon's Sexuality - description	10
Reveiw of <i>La Route des Flandres</i>	15
Chapter one -	
A study of 'vegetal' language	22
Chapter two -	
A study of 'animal' language	66
Chapter three -	
A study of 'nutritional' language	123
Chapter four -	
A study of 'abstract' language	140
Bibliography	211

ABSTRACT

II

Using *La Route des Flandres* as the central text and five other of his novels, namely *L'Herbe*, *La Bataille de Pharsale*, *Histoire*, *Leçon de Choses* and *Triptyque* to extend and elaborate the theme this thesis investigates the style and the function of language as used in the writing of Claude Simon as it relates to 'sexuality' - to show that despite new approaches and differences in various technical, narrative, and stylistic changes the overall view of 'sexuality' which emerges from the texts remains unaltered.

Four categories of language, namely animal, vegetal, nutritional and abstract show the visceral, biological and instinctual notion that coitus is the center of Simon's view of 'sexuality' and that the existential element of 'sexuality' is attached to this view. This study takes the seminal as the most representative examples because of the vastness of the material.

All the categories overlap as will obviously be the case with the metaphysical, associative, correlative networks and discussions will be pertinent to the others. Italicized type is used to refer to specific wording and also to show connections to other categories. Seemingly disparate topics are shown to be related.

The hypothesis is that in all Simon's representation whether directly sexual or not there is a perception of 'sexuality' as an elemental force as shown by his extensive variations on the representation of the 'grass' image. 'Grass' is perhaps the singular word to which all representation of 'sexuality' is linked on an individual scale and cosmological level of upheaval and violence which reverberates onto the individual's 'sexuality'.

A metaphor that can be used to describe the technique of study used in this thesis is that of a pebble (being 'sexuality') thrown into the water (the text) distorting the reflection of a whole (Simon's world view) into a myriad of images which eventually settle back into place and now creates a more complete picture because of the understanding gained of the component parts.

Abbreviations

RF La Route des Flandres

BP La Bataille de Pharsale

HI Histoire

TR Triptyque

LC Leçon de Choses

HE L'Herbe

INTRODUCTION

FOREWORD

This thesis uses six of Claude Simon's novels, namely *La Route des Flandres* - as the yardstick text -, *La Bataille de Pharsale*, *Histoire*, *L'Herbe*, *Triptyque* and *Leçon de Choses* to extract and discuss the topic of 'sexuality' from Simon's written language. 'Sexuality' can be defined in four distinct but related categories, to wit animal, vegetal, nutritional and lastly an abstract category which draws from diverse ideas to encapsulate the totality of Simon's view of 'sexuality' which is dispersed and fractionated through his work. These categories do not exist entirely independently for they rely heavily on language from other categories to imbue them with their richness and connotative nature. These four are the categories of language which best describe Simon's 'sexuality'. Certain abstractions may seem to be misplaced or totally pertinent in another, but obviously for reasons of space and the inherent nature of Simon's 'sexuality' the reader will quickly appreciate the fluidity of the categories.

Thus this thesis proposes to identify sub-systems into which the number of individual associations and associative patterns which arise from internal and external generators may be integrated meaningfully. This sub-system is the body of textual elements from which all the others can be seen to be derived. Moreover this system lets an external system organize the material in its own meticulous fashion. It is difficult to separate elements within these categories even and quotation too is difficult because of the textual connection. When one breaks the circle - one breaks the line of thought and therefore does an injustice to the poetic quality.

The unfamiliar reader can not know upon first touch the richness, the complexities, the structures and networks and the internal stimuli in these works, but there are indeed discernible patterns which are ever-widening. What is striking in the functioning of such fundamental categories is the number of different visions of each that occur and the range of different ways they act on the representational dimension of the novels. The intricacy and

flexibility with which they echo and cut across each other meaningfully are integrated the entire oeuvre and inform upon Simon's world view as well as drawing his view of 'sexuality' from it.

It is assumed that the reader of this thesis will be familiar with the texts so there is no need to reiterate the themes and synopses of the novels which already have been covered by various critics. References will be made directly from the texts and where appropriate to several articles which also focus on 'sexuality'. Raymond Jean's article¹ gave 'ideas' for the naming of the categories. However he emasculates his references by limiting his investigation to a study of two passages *La Route des Flandres* [RF:257-292] and *La Bataille de Pharsale* [BP:211-226]. He additionally limits himself in content and framework. John Fletcher's article² deals and works within the concept of eroticism which Georges Bataille expounds and shows the relationship between Simon and Bataille, which develops with physical reinforcement from Simon's novels. Finally an article by Jean Duffy³ establishes a valid but contentious feminist approach to Simon.

LANGUAGE

Within human life one is very much inside subjective experience. Objective elements perceived are finally reduced to subjective terms. One can only write one's own perception of reality and that itself does not hold water. Simon realizes this and is not interested in writing a fictional 'realistic account' of the world and characters. Simon's approach tends therefore be a distanced and objective account of the world.

'Sexuality' is a problematic part of man. It is a mysterious universal experience and can be very tortuous to understand. The moment of orgasm is intense and to detach it from the rest of life would be to severely misrepresent it, particularly in Simon. Discussion of 'sexuality' can only be subjective and hence is subject to a degree of contention, therefore discussion is difficult for 'sexuality' is, after all, based on a feeling rather than an intellectual premise. It must be considered as part of the entire data of Simon's novels and the body of thought which accompanies 'sexuality' would clearly not be available if language did not make it both explicit and implicit. Language is an integral part of 'sexuality'.

Simon's intentions as a writer are the basis of his approach to language. Simon himself has indicated his approach in his essay *La Fiction Mot à Mot*. This study aims to give a general definition and description of his objectives of writing as pertains his representation of 'sexuality'.

Simon's justification for writing experimental fiction is the restless dissatisfaction he has with pre-existing forms. Simon tends to believe in destruction while his impulse is to re-create. He is powerfully evocative while hesitant about the solidity of things. Ambiguity is replete in his work and is indeed a very fundamental aspect of 'sexuality'.

The writer does not deny the referential aspect of writing to the non-fictional world but does indeed concentrate on the form of writing. Reality becomes subservient to the creativity of language according to Simon and words conform exclusively to the reality they give birth to. Language is a natural sequence of remembrance and imagination and creates its own actuality out

of disconnected fragments - words reflect no presence but their own and associations arise. In Simon's novels there are a series of moments or situations linked together by fragile associations and whose chronological sequence can be merely approximated and is really of no consequence. There is an internal order of events. Thematically order emerges from the numerous related motifs and images, which complement and oppose each other, hence the multiple ambiguity is present everywhere, a reflection of life at large itself.

Simon is trying to capture that which clings closest to man's life. In the traditional novel there is a discontinuity between man and the way he perceives the world and the way he chooses to represent it. In Simon everything is questioned as to its validity. In reality not everything can happen at once, but in the mind it all seeps through. It is now the form that counts, not the content. By form this is language and narrative.

The content must be closely looked at to understand the world of the novel in particular its themes which while performing the normal function of binding the novel, also unlock an entirely new way of representation. Form and content merge, whereas in the traditional novel the medium was a means to an end. Simon's literature emerges as a code or an enmeshing of several codes -an institution which transmits and formalizes meanings. By studying the language in symbiosis with the thematic level, the issues and destiny of human life are explored.

Simon claims that he writes not images, but words - he writes the words on a page then the others come. To suggest love one need not speak of love nor be tied to one particular 'code' of love. There is not an absolute relationship between words and their referents, but they are the same. Language is referential to the world and is useful but some language does retain its freedom and allows for progressive perception. Language in its artistic use is not ordered, there is no unity. Simon wants to invent and forge a structure that would cope with his world view.

The Simonian style is capable of representing the creative process at work in the mind of the writer. More and more Simon practices a method of objective description which does not seek to interpret the object as value laden and fraught with moral significance for humanity - the

solidity of the objects presence becomes a foil or correlative for the obsessive states of mind and the shifting perceptions and time-frames of the observer.

Simon's language is bi-functional as it deals with a profound expression of man's 'sexuality' in relation to other experiences in life, however it can also be viewed as expressive and descriptive in its own right.

Taking *metaphor* as a starting point meaning is produced through ceaseless re-working of words and by patient exploration of metaphoric networks. Here is 'production of meaning' as opposed to its mere expression.

The language is deeply metaphorical and this acts as a cooperative fusion of meaning - a very important device of 'creative literature.' Metaphors provide a rich compound of meaning rather than a simple meaning illustrated by a built in analogy. This device is so central to Simon's language that it is not only very important but also very elusive and protean - there is great diversity, intense proliferation of images and 'idées' readily assuming various shapes or roles. Simon's words/signs can be literal in one context and concomitantly not, so that it is literary in one set of respects and metaphoric in another. He uses such a device which culminates in the parallel effect thematically.

The reader's perception of character and action are dominated by the systems of generation, connotation and association. Meaning is not able to be disassociated from its constituent linguistic matter. There is a constant mechanism of internal proliferation at work -which makes it impossible to call one image up without an other or others being drawn upon. Each transition is perpetrated through the perception of similarities. The words do not necessarily refer in a determinate and specific fashion to entities in the real world. This shows a network of associations generated by textual items organized so as to leave no element in isolation. Each moment in the text generates linkages to other passages and each passage repeats and rearranges the elements mentioned elsewhere and therefore recalls the network of associations already established in the narration. There is a constant reappearance of the same elements across episodes and this results in the creation of a number of powerful motifs. Each scene is like a

collage composed of an assemblage of this cluster of paradigms and consequently episodes as a whole become kaleidoscopic images of each other.

The extraordinary density is not accidental, it requires a storage of a large number of forms which return incessantly in the text, carrying with them a wealth of established relationships, textually or inter-textually, which are constantly enriched, assuming new relationships and change according to the sequence they are placed in. There is no definitive way a word/image can be interpreted, only a cumulative and intensifying process in which they play their role. Unlike the symbol in normal usage which is fixed in content and maintains a constant relationship with the world, the phenomenon in Simon's work continually modifies its connections with the world of other phenomenon, its significance proliferates, spreads in unexpected direction, attaching itself to forms not originally perceived in the writers choice of material. This proliferation is perhaps the singularly most widespread, recurring and telling feature of his prose, no matter what other technical play is at work and is found in every work discussed. 'Sexuality' in the form of sensual analogies is a major factor in provoking associations in Simon's prose - supported in all the texts.

Thus meanings and situations previously distinct are joined together by words and provoked by associations occurring in the mind and arising directly out of the material being handled, so the effect in the end is made up of parts, but the entirety is the effect. Precision is eroded by metaphorical language.

Within Simon's prose there is a lack of consequential argument, there is a plot, but this is ill-defined. The characters are ill-defined. Simon is preoccupied between vision and disorder. The order of clusters allows the mind, otherwise victim of chaotic impressions, to perceive images and themes in these clusters, but it is not an order of simplification, the density and variety precludes simplification. It is through a personal association of ideas that the narrative flows and continuity is developed through this means. The novels are constructed as sequences of scenes of varying length, some static and some jerking into motion. Language is adapted to suit mood, narration dialogue and description. Everything is hinged together by a link. Language is that link - fiction mot à mot.

At this point it is important to expound upon the difference in style attained in the later texts, namely *Leçon de Choses* and *Triptyque* for they advance the methods which are embryonic, but nonetheless powerful in the earlier texts.

The beginning of *Leçon de Choses* is very telling of the metaphorical, generative and associative working of language and additionally the author's intent:

. . . La description (la composition) peut se continuer (ou être complétée a peu près indéfiniment selon la minutie apportée a son exécution, l'entraînement des métaphores proposées, l'addition d'autres objets visibles dans leur entier ou fragmentés par l'usure, le temps, un choc (soit encore qu'ils n'apparaissent qu'en partie dans le cadre du tableau), sans compter les diverses hypothèses que peut susciter le spectacle. . .

[LC:10-11]

Objective description of minute detail and precision is transformed as objects begin to summon sights, sounds and smells and move into a mobile pattern of anecdotes and images in a similar fashion to *Triptyque* - they develop a new artistic form. Objects and variations are certainly ever-present as generators and parts of the metaphorical associations and clusters of words are the most intense in *Triptyque*, but Simon never overlooks issues at the heart of man.

Triptyque and *Leçon de Choses* recycle a number of key images from the past work and insert them into a different kind of textual system which defuses them as representational images, that is everything is demystified and the whole play of concealment is on the surface and is nothing more than language doubling back on itself. The imaginary has disappeared and immediacy is created by the text. Specific relations between words and objects makes it clear that objects in the text are not concrete objects but words generated by words. Objects are not tied to a specific 'signified' but are points at which a number of meanings converge and from which a network of associations diverge. Meaning is always sliding along these networks.

The achievement of these texts is to establish a continuous process of production of fictions by the work of narration without ever allowing the text to develop into a story. Fragmented narration incites in the reader the desire to construct a unity, but the reader can only fail. Instead the reader is left with a complex network of association and a structure which has no

unified narration. This complex structure is not foreclosed by a convergence of meaning but maintained as a plurality of signification, without point of center or possible arrest. Thus it is harder to refer to the thematic level of these two and if it does so it is the reader's own imposition. These texts move away from the realist text and the centripetal movement which governs the wider narrative structuring and familiar thematic concerns and moves into a formalistic experiment uses generative elements and text-triggers. Description is without strain. Extended similes and multiple synonyms exist, which serve to place reality ever more in doubt. There exists an apparent objectivity. Extended and sinuous qualification is unnecessary. Everything is on the same plain since the uninvolved, unplaced observer treats the text evenly.

The tone of these two texts is cool and there is less rhetoric about life and destiny. They are impressive essays in the art of the narrative, written in an unemotional and spare manner, making no concessions to sentiments. Homogeneity of style strips the sexual act almost entirely of its cultural meaning, persona and emotional significance. It becomes material and lacking sensual significance, although described with vivid detail and precision.

Continuously and increasingly new motifs are forged. It is a difficult task to represent what is eternally changing, but Simon has captured a form which describes physically just that. Fragmented visions are presented, not a final reality, but in the end the effect is like music, where each movement dissolves into another imperceptibly changing to a new theme, but effecting a whole.

Simon merges all aspects to explore the impressionistic effects and verbal depths of language. Converging ideas intersect and radiate out in non-linear directions and form takes shape imperceptibly as under a painter's brush. Images refer to general truths, but through juxtaposition of objects, not direct meditation, though Simon has developed this as his writing style has matured so in the earlier novels there is an element of direct meditation. Meaning emerges through analogy and the dense proliferation of images.

Thus his view of 'sexuality' is sometimes straightforward, but there exists more often than not an abstruse 'sexuality' which the reader only begins to grasp after lengthy and concentrated reading - it is more and more difficult not to be sensitive to the force of 'sexuality' in Simon's

work and the reader inevitably is forced to reflect while reading on the nature of writing itself. The way one comes to understand Simon's writing is comparable in a very basic way to a film called *'The Harder They Come'*⁴, which is shot in pigeon-english. Upon first sight the viewer conversant in english is unable to decipher the spoken language but the sub-titles makes it comprehensible. At a certain point in the film these are removed and the viewer is usually so immersed in the film that he does not notice and only later he can understand the language having been first familiarized by the use of the sub-titles in conjunction with the aural component. After lengthy association and developing a new approach to reading, forswearing old concepts and expectations of the novel, this is how the reader learns to read Simon and hence 'sexuality' - meaning is established by association.

One must accept the cogency of the text rather than one's own. Meaning is established by analogy and parallel and even more radically articulated in the later texts, but the human side always remains with or without narrators. The human side is illustrated strongly through 'sexuality'.

THE NATURE OF SIMON'S 'SEXUALITY'

Simon writes about the eternal human situation of 'sexuality' and his method shows its very elusiveness. He deals with 'sexuality' within precise and anthropological parameters. 'Sexuality' is powerfully erotic with Simon but his vision is tragic, but never non-compassionate nor without a humour to give light relief, albeit a black humour. There can be no doubt that this black humour is an important ingredient.

'Sexuality' scarcely departs from a central episode, the meeting of lovers for which the one and only reason is the meeting of two human beings. The below is not only useful as a contingent illustration of the immediate passage, but as a fundamental metaphor. It is not the only metaphor, but is rich in virility. By no means is it the only one, but the fact that it places emphasis on lust would support this and offers a yardstick for the rest:

. . . et donc pas beaucoup question d'amour, à moins que, justement l'amour - ou plutôt la passion - ce soit cela : cette chose muette, ces élans, ces répulsions, ces haines, tout informulé - et même informé -, et donc cette simple suite de gestes, cet assaut, ce corps-à-corps urgent, rapide, sauvage, n'importe où, peut-être dans l'écurie même, sur une balle de paille, elle les jupes haut troussées, avec ses bas, ses jarretelles, le bref éclair de peau éblouissante en haut des cuisses, tous deux haletants, furieux, avec sans doute la terreur d'être surpris . . . [RF:48]

'Sexuality' is a basic function or drive of man. The sexual act is primal and instinctual. It is described as a biological conditioning with a stronger pull on man and inevitably involving 'woman'.

The act is purely physical, mechanistic, impersonal and holds no emotional significance, beyond the self. 'Sexuality' is exposed as functional but there is no lack of erotic language. A representation of 'woman' will emerge under this premise. No intelligence is credited to 'woman' but there is no denial of it. Simon takes one side of human nature and adheres closely to it.

Man is perceived as an animal in his actions and he is put on earth to play out his part in the eternal and cyclical flux of the world. Anonymity and lack of individuality highlight this as does the eternal concerns and merging of narrators. As often as not it seems that man in general is conceived as a being existing independent of his passions. Simon affirms on the other hand that man can only exist dependent on his passions.

'Sexuality' is perceived as a taboo, in that it is a human and animal activity, not limited to the lower of the species. This perhaps horrifies man, but he allows it to persist to such an extent that the term bestiality⁵ has emerged and is linked to 'sexuality'. It arises from an animal impulse and is a return to nature (the animal imagery indicates this) through 'sexuality'. Physical 'sexuality' is fundamental. One must include this if the rest of the data is to be comprehended. Indeed the sexual functions of animals represent the sexual act at its most fundamental state.

The animal impulse causes the crisis. It upsets an ordered system where man the animal reigns supreme. Unity and composure is shattered. The being who yields to the sexual act is perceived as more animal-like, prey to blind forces in action and wallowing in the loss of control and oblivion. Animal 'sexuality' brings out this disorder as no barriers are raised against it. Animal imagery also heightens the tenuous situation, where man is highly likely to revert to natural instincts. Animal disorder reigns free, subsides and the solitude of the individual returns. The only modification of this is death. This return to animal instincts is a transgression without which the animal instincts would run their course unhindered. In passion there is little freedom and is similar to the Pascalian 'Ordre des Corps matérialiste', without the religious aspect. There are three loves -conjugal, sexual and romantic. Simon writes of the former two and in fact says conjugal love is based on sexual love.

In the human sphere sexual activity has broken away from animal simplicity. It is in essence a transgression and a return to primitive freedom.

There is however with humans the inevitable duality of mind and body which must be considered in 'sexuality'. However a man is viewed he is never in truth just an animal, but from the author's point of view 'sexuality' is a normal and acceptable function in whatever form it appears. When one speaks of the mind one is speaking of an entity which differentiates man

from other objects (with the sole possible exception of higher animals) and to single out the distinguishing marks of man which are of the mental kind, we confine our attention to differences of activity not anatomy.

Man is a discontinuous being, is mortal and this is part of the fundamental thesis which makes up Simon's version of 'sexuality'. Every other being is the 'other' to man and it is this which he strives to eradicate in the sexual union by attempting to substitute a feeling of profound continuity in place of the individual and isolated discontinuity. One remains alienated from the 'other' and there is a tragic sense of self, history and human relationships and tenderness that pervades and saturates his work, illustrated strongly when the characters are aware their affairs are doomed from the start.

Also 'sexuality' emerges as a refuge from the destructive work of time, but inversely highlights it. 'Sexuality' is based on an awareness of life and death and is comprised of a symbiotic relationship between pain and pleasure.

There is an ambiguity which is fundamental to all life experience in that things constantly change and there is a degree of subjective content in all things. This ambiguity which lies at the heart of all things is definitive in an understanding of 'sexuality'. 'Sexuality' in Simon is ambiguous and at its very base there is this incongruity.

There is an element of violence and violation which kindles all of Simon's 'sexuality'. In essence the domain of 'sexuality' is the domain of violence - both are seen as instinctual. This domain can be personal or more abstrusely a cosmological violence, founded in time and nature and the cyclical nature of the world which reverberates onto 'sexuality'. This will emerge particularly from the texts of *La Route des Flandres*, *Histoire* and *La Bataille de Pharsale* which are located directly within the realm or memory of war, more than the other texts, however the other texts are replete with this motif. Parallels between sex and death are drawn and death is shown to prevail at the very core of desire. Death plays a part in setting sexuality in motion and adds to the mysteriousness which is mingled with pleasure and desire.

Violence emerges from the abrupt wrench out of discontinuity and death is the most violent encounter one experiences (supposedly). 'Sexuality' is the act which pulls man out of his

tenacious obsession with his discontinuous self by providing union with the 'other' - 'woman' within a biological premise, even if only momentarily and illusory. It causes a wound, that is never totally closed and is founded in anguish. Sensual pleasure does not equal anguish and death-like oblivion, but being anguished and/or close to death heightens the pleasure factor.

The situations from which 'sexuality' emerge do not say that war for example is sex or conversely, but rather there are parallels of situation in each - both have extremes of intensity. Death is the psychological pendant of sexuality. Certainly death is not sought, so for Simon this is symbolic. The examples may be excessive but are a sign to show that death is always present. 'Sexuality' opens the way to death and a denial of the individual self.

Death in that it destroys man does leave behind a continuity which is stressed in the cyclical motion of the world. Individual sexual activity by dissolving separate beings reveals a fundamental continuity - the survival of the species. 'Sexuality' is depicted as a potent affirmation of life against destruction and death and as a possible antidote to despair and nihilism. It exists in symbiosis with death and war born of 'woman'. Reproduction reinforces the sub-conscious drive for life.

Violence and aggression could be construed as an aspect which turns this into pornography, however pornography has as its ultimate objective arousal and elision of desire. There is no trace of this in Simon and if the language is sometimes crude, situation requires this and language emerges as authentic and arises out of the biological premise set forth. Pornographic writing also has the conventional rhythm of a slow teasing, building up to the inevitable climax but in Simon the act is subservient to a different rhythm - closely observed bodies come and go. There is no correspondence between sexual and textual climax. Human sexual activity is one act amongst many.

Thus 'sexuality' moves away and becomes independent of the natural goal of reproduction, although this is the positive side of 'sexuality'. Reproduction is the only hope of salvation as the chains of history stop us from breaking free of the 'gorillus' aspect and it is only through reproduction that man may evolve away from his destructive tendencies. Man's instinct is to survive and continue the species and the changes since first man are perceived as cosmetic.

Perhaps with continued reproduction through History man can evolve away from the 'gorillus' in him and develop the 'sapien' in him to dominate. Perhaps then man as a race not gender will be become peaceful as the intellect tells him to and man can break free of the chains of history.

LA ROUTE DES FLANDRES

La Route des Flandres is replete with the thematic material pertaining to 'sexuality'. It is used to establish seminal examples and the other texts are be expanded on in their own right, particularly when they contain material which is only embryonic in *La Route des Flandres*. For these reasons *La Route des Flandres* is the only text expanded upon in regard to the basic framework of the novel.

Over the seventeen year period of his writing covered by these texts Simon's style, linguistic changes and developments, narrative differences and perception of objectives of writing have changed but the underlying pervading image of 'sexuality' seems to have remained unchanged.

La Route des Flandres is principally narrated by Georges and the novel follows his stream of consciousness in bed with Corrine until the last few pages where she has departed in a fury. Memory, recreation, imagination, events which happened or allegedly happened make up his night with Corrine, in which is she is perceived as supremely sexual, and is detailed in part three of the novel (initiated in part one, completed in part three and alluded to in part two.) Georges' mind flicks back to the sordid events of the Flanders Road in 1940 during a retreat from the German advance.

In the powerfully erotic account of the night of love which is at the center of the novel in that it is from there that the narrator Georges recalls all the past events in his mind, which is not physically imprisoned as is the body in time. Georges seeks knowledge through Corrine's body pursues upon her body without ultimate success, except for an awareness in the end of the 'casual, incoherent and destructive work of time.'

The novel develops in a highly original mode, a moment lodged in the narrator's consciousness - the sight, smell and sound of a brief but unforgettable incident which took place - a few moments in time expanded into a complex and powerful work of fiction. It explores the incident from every angle in the present and past, but also is dense in imaginative detail, which negates the general degrees of actuality of the true/real memories and linear time. What emerges is

what preoccupies the reflective consciousness at the moment of the narrative - the moment of 'énonciation' and 'énoncé' are blurred. A disproportionate importance is given to the hypothetical and the night with Corrine thus emerges as seemingly not founded in reality. It is an intricate system of flashbacks. These lend themselves to more understanding but nothing is ever definite. No entire re/deconstructions occur. They occur as different points of view. It is a meditation developed from this single experience on suffering, time, war, hunger for knowledge, definitiveness, love and the illusory permanence the latter offers. It contains all the elements and embraces all the elements which make Simon's 'sexuality' what it is. The narrator speaks of a situation and then metaphorically moves into it.

No element can be picked out as more important than another, they all inevitably connect, but there are a number of incidents that define the background of *La Route des Flandres* and establish a basis for the themes, particularly the connections between love and death. There are three realms of time to which these incidents are traceable:- 1) pre-war (the steeplechase, where the narrator first glimpses Corrine and from which all the material concerning her and the jockey is derived. 2) war (which involves the rout, horse and battle motif, transportation in a cattle truck, the Prisoner of War camp and the barn where Georges and other men momentarily glimpse a woman who comes to represent 'sexuality' and hope and finally the ditch (during which all the discussion and fabrication about women and their universal qualities emerges.) 3) post-war (where Georges meets and makes love with Corrine and actually de/reconstructs his past experiences, memories and fabrications, which themselves are altered with time, but presented as they present themselves at the moment of consciousness. Additionally he releases his pent-up sexual desire. Corrine is a common link, not only because of her marriage but because she symbolizes the feminine ideal of sensuality, beauty and coquettishness that both tortured and inspired him as well as others during long hours of despair, internment and battle.

Sub-incidents are the physical or imagined love-making with Corrine that merge because of the nature of writing and discussions that merge the ancestor's, the barn-girl's and Corrine's infidelities and speculates on their 'sexuality'.

These are the source of the incidents drawn from, which are inter-linked yet distinct images that form the substance of the novel's narrative.

As the novel progresses , the inventive assertiveness of language creates a direct link between love and death and they remain linked through vision and metaphor. One must see the work as a circle where one can break into it at anyone point, but as soon as one does one is subsumed by the tangents of language, image and word association that make up the circle and all are linked with no decisive breaks - all the elements somehow recall the others, ad infinitum.

The positioning of male narrators is foremost because after all it is through them that the representation of 'sexuality' emerges - whether impressions, memories, ideals based on experience or heresay. Simon does see the human being as two distinct sexes and his representations do point to this. The word 'man' can be construed as 'genderised' purposely in Simon. He makes no attempt to be non-discriminatory in his use of language. When Simon speaks of man, he speaks of the 'male' species and 'female' species. If women do display any particularly independent and non-stereotypic roles they are generally described as somewhat masculine and deformed, as the antique dealer in *Histoire* and the nurse in *L'Herbe*. The male encompasses the violent and destructive side of life, whereas woman is life-giver, yet because of the ambiguity of woman's sex, she too is symbolically life-taker. Her reproductive ability places emphasis on the former.

Simon does not attempt to hide his 'sexist' perspective. In no way does he present one sex as superior to the other, rather he exhibits without remorse his belief in the distinct heterogeneity of the two, which in today's society is swept under the table in the movement of the equality between the sexes. Simon specifically makes a distinction between the two genders and his use of language is non-discriminatory, he talks of men and women from the same language groups, just varying in intensity. 'Sexuality' by man's very make-up has always and will always retain a 'difference'. Simon has, in his own way, hit on the future of a workable and realistic feminism - the freedom to have differences - seen as equally important and magnified.

The female body⁶ has occupied a central place in imagination, its images pervade poetry, history, mythology, visual arts and treatises. It inspires fear and attraction, is perceived as both beautiful and unclean, alluring and dangerous, source of pleasure and nurturing, but also evil and destructive. Individuality is not totally suppressed but neither is it very important. It

is mainly retained as matter of narrative exigency. In short, it has and is wrought with ambiguities. It is mysterious and duplicitous. The question of 'sexuality' and women's bodies is a highly loaded one and is central to this discussion of 'sexuality'.

In *La Route des Flandres* the articulation of themes and episodes is finally transposed onto Georges' desperate exploration and intellectual (im)penetration and physical penetration of Corrine's body. She activates the themes and helps proliferate the text. 'Woman's' body plays an integral part in the text as an object of desire and also a generator of text - sexual and textual converge, meet and make for a fine representation of 'sexuality'.

'Woman' is raised to a secondary level of representation. She is presented as what she represents for man, not necessarily what she signifies. Her meanings as she might produce them are suppressed in favour of a discourse structured by connotations. Representations do remain at a denotative level but we are constantly aware of the connotative level. Often the strict literal definition of an expression is difficult to distinguish from its connotative levels and 'woman' emerges as an 'expression' to be deciphered. Sexual posture provokes its own analogies and 'woman's' body becomes the terrain of man's battle and personal experience. Love-making and erotic images are an important part of the narrative unfolding in *La Route des Flandres* and the other texts. It is vital to the novel's narrative as Georges' mind moves to and from the bed in which he makes love to Corrine that this highlights the importance of 'sexuality'. Georges plays the role of a vigorous lover and the episode concludes on a note of awakening, a return to reality, when his sexual appetite is satiated, dozes off and wakes when Corrine is dressed. Her role is finished in his fantasy and she leaves.

'Woman' enables, as a submitting partner, the narrator to discover's man's inner craving for sensuality, eroticism, fantasy and the eternal and the existential - 'woman' is a 'route' they travel, physically and symbolically and she fulfills a core need of men.

Likewise 'woman' functions as a revealer of eternal mystery - hierophant. To know her may be to understand some of the underlying mysteries of life. Through her men try to discover the blissful experience of the primal condition, however the narrators never fully understand woman's being and she remains directly associated with non-progressiveness.

'Woman's' sex is also a reminder of the mortality of all things, inspiring fear in the narrators as much as desire. The most apparent is when Georges' mind moves from the ditch to cunnilingus. The passages of Georges in the ditch and **grass** clearly indicate that Corrine's genitalia and the lips of the **grass** covered ditch are synonymous. Both represent the original source of life that Georges is longing to return to. The ditch is correlated with the womb and security. Georges' need to return to the security of the womb is symbolic of his search for refuge from solitude and the ever-present reality of death. When Simon claims that 'woman' allows man to escape from time, this merges women into one identity. Georges must touch Corrine, lick her and taste her to assure himself he is alive and Corrine becomes an object of physical desire, source of knowledge and an ideal of refuge, yet she is also the source of death as emerges in descriptions of their love-making - a return to the womb can be represented as death as one is not alive as a thinking person in the womb. The archetypal 'woman' becomes an enigma symbolizing the mysteries of life, sublime, yet beautiful, and always beckoning but never entirely satisfying, real or unreal of desire.

In short a woman's body can dissolve into a tissue of diverse meanings and hence can be read as the body of the text since its construction is fundamentally the material process of the interrelation and superimposition of verbal signs which constitute the text. Her body becomes a means to knowledge - she is means and catalyst. particularly indicated in *La Route des Flandres* and Simon's representation of 'sexuality' must be deduced from its objective configurations in the minds of the narrators.

To understand George's obsessions with Corrine and his obsessive states of mind, we must comprehend his internment in a Prisoner of War camp, the disastrous and moribund predicament he is in and his and the other men's (for Georges, like women are, is representative of the whole not the individual) deprivation of women and human rights and his consequent thoughts of her and conversation about her with two other internees, Blum and Iglésia, the latter of which was the jockey for de Reixach and supposedly had an affair with Corrine, de Reixach's wife. Corrine is an integral element, a fixed experience in both experiences. Corrine emerges in every subsequent text, with the exception perhaps of *Leçon de Choses*. Through carnal knowledge of her, Georges tries to acquire an understanding of the depths of the past and especially to penetrate the mysteries of the Captain's death. Georges is unsure if de Reixach committed suicide because of Corrine's infidelities or was genuinely killed

in the war, whether he knew of the affair or not - Georges never discovers this, and like everything else it is ultimately elusive.

As the characters are stressed and fatigued one can not expect the lucidity of a rational mind and in the sexual act the character is blurred and half-asleep, but in the process of the novel the same sexual act and memories are retraced with variations. Why some recur and some are added, must infer a certain state of mind. The medium here is vital and represents people who are not lucid to a point of clarity. The narrators do not have the energy or ability to control the kaleidoscope of impressions coming in.⁷

'Sexuality' is an obsessive state, but Corrine emerges not just as a sex object. There must be some authorial responsibility for portraying women as objects, but this is far too simplistic an accusation to lay on Simon. 'Woman' does play an important role and complement's man's position, in showing the unfolding of order or disorder prevalent in life and showing human traits across time.

The elements extracted refer to language, images and themes that can be attributed to 'sexuality' and therefore points to the universal rather than a particular human experience. Man, animal and object are broadly associated with types and easily interchangeable in the eye of the beholder. Extensive use of depersonalization and metaphor emphasizes the cyclic as well as the repetitive nature of human and cosmological history. Whether in nature, battle or in the arms of a woman the narrators enter a realm of archetypal situations whose essential characteristics transcend the conventional boundaries of time and space. Archetypes point to a timeless quality or some recurrent pattern in the human condition. Death and sex are great equalizers of 'man' and 'woman' and sex is the inevitable partner in any hope of salvation.

'Sexuality' is interwoven with other themes and 'woman' becomes a medium through which other questions, oftentimes indirectly are posited. The novel like the protagonist achieves nothing, comprehends nothing and yet in the process imparts a great deal to us, conveying with great vividness the situation on the Flanders Road and consequently a rich network of sexual associations.

Endnotes

1. Jean: Les Signes de l'Eros
2. Fletcher: Erotisme et création ou la Mort en Sursis
3. Duffy: Mi(s)reading Claude Simon
4. Produced and directed by Perry Henzell, 1973
5. Bataille: Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and The Taboo p94.
6. The Grand Larousse de la Langue Française Librairie Larousse, 1971 defines woman as:
 - i) Femme : cherchez la femme dont tel homme est épri, c'est-a-dire cherchez les mobiles secrets et passionels des ses actes
and
 - ii) La femme: type idéal comprenant les caractères communs a toutes les femmes.

All subsequent definitions are derived from this source.
7. Additionally Georges recollections show that the basic drive is to survive and reproduce and therefore food, knowledge and sex are vital components, which emerge through the tenuous situations described in *La Route des Flandres*.

CHAPTER ONE

VEGETAL

A brand of 'sexuality' is put forward which contains erotic signs for the characters. It appeals to the aesthetic interest of the reader not the erotic and it does not attempt to inspire sexual activity. There are no gratuitous displays of 'sexuality' and the text does not indulge sex in any base way. 'Sexuality' is established as close to nature and the numerous metaphors and images indicate that the characters seek their integration into the world order of harmony. Simon submits the sexual organs to a process of enlargement, which points to a sexual feeling which lives and unfolds out of a contact with suggestive forms.

Now it seems that **grass** is the central word of this category - it is the *grass-roots*. **Grass** is the central image of love-making between Corrine and Georges as he lies in the ditch on the Flanders Road and makes love to Corrine, **grass** and pubic hair respectively, being associated. It is central to the image of the horse that Georges sees eating **grass** and reflects as to why he shouldn't too, after all the horse eats it. In his reduction to such animalistic conditions, he equates himself with the horse. It additionally hides the mystery of the earth, as it hides woman's sex, a subject which fascinates the Simonian narrator.

It is characteristic that the generating image, that is playing a genuine role of metaphorical catalyst is evoked by **grass**. **Grass** is present throughout the entire book of *La Route des Flandres* and it is supremely important in a representation of 'sexuality', that its very importance and function should be understood. It tends to appear with the same characters and mostly always within a sexual framework. It operates as a stimulation of the sexual imagination

and longings of the narrator and makes for a dense proliferation of sensation (It arises mainly from the ditch which underlines Georges' precarious situation) blossom in him, which constitutes a precise sexual situation with an intense and violent presence, where primarily nutritional, sensory and animal instincts operate. There is something primal and archaic in the order of the senses. One enters into the realm of 'sexuality' through the passage of primal experience, directly passed on through the sensorial ambiance where each word is charged with denotative, connotative and associative levels. In other words, it is through writing that the **assimilation** from **grass** to the sex of 'woman' and hence '**woman**' that sensory intoxication and nutritional intoxication is transformed to that of sexual intoxication.

All of the language described henceforth arises out of language working in such a way and with **grass** possibly being the central image to which all can be traced or linked, even seemingly indirectly or obscurely at times. **Grass** is thus the starting point of this discussion, to place the reader stylistically and thematically, on Simon's ground, which is never motionlessness and always changing, always elusive.

DITCH

The scene in which Georges lies in the ditch in the middle of the rout, taking refuge illustrates all the qualities inherent in the discussion on 'sexuality' which will be touched upon. It illustrates a pent-up sexual energy accumulated in repressive surrounding, but above all it crucially marks a central point from which 'sexuality' will be discussed as a yardstick for the thematic and associative networks.

Grass grows thick in the battlefields and camp grounds which brings memories of erotic foliage. When Georges hides in the ditch from the passing sentry, it is similar to straddling Corrine in the sexual position. One need only take a representative a few representative examples to illustrate this¹:

couché de tout son long sur le ventre dans l'herbe du fossé haletant [RF:227]

Georges toujours couché dans le fossé [...] le visage parmi l'herbe nombreuse, la terre velue
[RF:230]

Here Georges is lying in a ditch and this is parallel by his lying in bed with Corrine through similar erotic sensations and language. As Georges hides in the ditch, which is representative of the earth which eventually all life returns to, so does he hide or take refuge in sexuality, from which he hopes to escape discontinuity in the sexual act. There is a constant connection between death and sexual excitement established from this crucial marking point. (Refer to that relating to the ditch and womb scene in the animal, abstract, and nutritional categories for each confirms this image and extends it.)

WOMAN'S SEX

Beyond a concrete particular female it is 'woman's' sex that fascinates the male narrator. It haunts and obsesses the narrator. This part of her carries many synonyms, of which vegetation and 'woman's' sex are frequently and intensely correlated. This arises in *La Route des Flandres* because of the ditch and its surrounds partly and also because the one evokes the other. Certainly there is enough language to suggest that this is a constant throughout the Simonian novel. By equating sexual parts with vegetation, a visceral and intuitive bond of nature, 'sexuality' and 'woman' is reinforced. The strong descriptions of genitalia refer to a fundamental 'sexuality'. Additionally it fits with George's role of a dispassionate observer of Corrine's sexual organs. Scopophilia is abundant. In effect 'sexuality' and its descriptions are not restrained in Simon and the words he uses are those used in a scientific sense without moral or pejorative coloration. The images so powerfully evocative and unclear of the organs of reproduction are coupled with more and more detailed pictures of the amorous embrace.

The *lips of the vagina* and the *ditch* are correlated and emerge as a hiding place and comforting:

cette étroite fissure [RF:230]

sillon de la terre [RF:242]

[au centre] une minuscule *fente horizontale* aux bords collés [RF:247]

lèvres de la fente [RF:260]

nid [RF:275]

fourré [RF:275]

(Refer to other associations abstracted in the rabbit and ditch sections in the animal and abstract categories.)

There are numerous correlations between *vegetation* and *pubic hair*:

bouche herbue [RF:39]
ce buisson [RF:180]
deux broussailleuses et fauves toisons [RF:181]
toison d'or [RF:186]
l'herbe odorante du fossé [RF:242]
sa noire et âcre senteur d'humus [RF:242]
touffe broussailleuse [RF:242]
touffeur [RF:243]
soyeuse et sauvage broussaille [RF:246]
l'emmêlement cette moiteur légère touffue [RF:247]
buisson [RF:259]
toison bouclé [RF:275]
tignasse rousse [BP:75]
l'ovale poilu [BP:75]
sillon bistre [BP:48]
poils jaunâtre [BP:212]
crinière toison [HI:113]
noire touffue frisée [HI:271]
verdolement des buissons [HI:342]
végétation rêche [HI:354]
sillon [TR:195]
boucles cuivrées [TR:21]
duvet de poils blonds [TR:21]
fine toison [TR:52]
touffe de poils clairs [TR:81]
lèvres poilues [TR:160]
l'épaisse toison de poils [LC:103]
poils collés en mèches gluantes [LC:112]

l'épaisse broussaille de poils [LC:142]

poils aux boucles collées [LC:149]

touffues dans le sillon entre les fesses [LC:149]

...Au centre du corps la *touffe poilue du pubis* s'ét largement d'un marron plus foncé que la chevelure, comme une *végétation parasite*, une espèce de postiche proéminent collé sur la chair lisse... [TR:212]

tache, ce triangle noir, *sombre, sauvage et broussilleux*, cette sorte de végétation comme parasitaire [HE:249]

mousse [RF:275]

comme si la terre m'aspirait ma tête tirée ver le *bas le sol l'odeur d'humus de mousse* [...] (elle écarta encore ses cuisses [BP:75]

l'herbe [...] *couverte de rosée* [RF:246]

Corrine is drawn into this image again because of '*rosée*' and her name being evocative of '*coral*', which is draws on the colour '*rose*.'

surface *poilu* de la vaste terre [BP:179]

This arises from a description of a train and the earth it moves across is described as such. This can be equated with pubic hair because of previous associations and connotations.

l'envie de me pencher et d'écarter les *mottes* pour voir encore d'où [HI:133]

The above arises after a reference made to a weed growing out of the earth and the reference made to hairy leaves assimilates this passage with the fascination of female genitalia.

poussa la *lame de couteau* entre deux crampons une plaque de terre noirâtre mêlée de *brins verts* s'ajouter au [HI:240]

The above shows Corrine as a young girl and her brother discussing a friend of her's, whom he claims he has had intercourse with. He bends down to remove a clod from his shoe. With the penis having been correlated elsewhere with a knife/weapon, then this assumes sexual and violent overtones. Corrine and her brother taunt each other, and play a game of cat and mouse, followed by insults, however her objections as elsewhere to the treatment of women as objects and in such crude terms is very minimal.

touffe de poils noir et frisés de son pubis [BP:198]

The male gaze is relevant in the above situation, just as in every case of a fabrication or representation by a male narrator, but here the artist's model is viewed in much the same way as the actress of *Triptyque*, that is with the seemingly innocent gaze 'art'. Her pubic hair becomes linked with the bristles of the paintbrush which have taken on phallic and aggressive tendencies. (Refer to the hair and painting motif in the vegetal category.)

son membre luisant et cylindrique sortant à demi de l'épaisse toison [TR:47]

This functions as a part of the hole motif which is expanded upon in the fish section of the animal category. This is inherent in the entire representation of 'sexuality'.

...l'épaisse toison noire où le membre luisant continue son va- et-vient contraste avec la blancheur lisse des fesses et des cuisses. La base du membre raidi et musculeux disparaît dans un buisson de poils aux reflets roux. Les cuisses de l'homme coupées un peu avant le genou par le bord déchiré de la fente ouverte dans l'affiche sont couvertes de poils sombres aux reflets roux aussi qui se raréfient vers le haut et cessent complètement les fesses. Si on trempe sa main dans la fontaine il semble qu'elle est enserrée par un gant glacé coupé net au poignet. Sous les doigts le contact de la longue mousse verte est doux, velouté. Si on l'arrache elle reste accrochée aux doigts, un peu gluante comme du coton mouillé. L'un des garçons pousse l'autre du coude. Se déplacement rapidement en oblique dans le lit de la rivière une seconde truite sort de sous le pont, hésite, revient sur la gauche, se laisse paresseusement déporter en arrière par le courant, repart d'un mouvement vif et s'immobilise finalement... [TR:16-17]

This combines the vegetation, the fish and the hole motif and the play of lightness and darkness inherent in such a motif. This has phallic and sexual connotations. The notion of spying and awareness of transgression is touched upon here for shortly hereafter just as the fish is aware of someone's presence, so is one of the couple copulating in the barn.

jeune femme debout devant la glace et qui à plusieurs reprises, d'un geste d'automate, passe les doigts de sa main sur la *touffe frisée et ombreuse de son pubis* [TR:213]

A description is given of the woman - supposedly the deceived of her wedding night - cupping her breasts and in the background trucks pass causing a paroxysm of vibrations. Her nipples swell and she seems to be in a trance as she is not consciously aware of her body except in a manner similar to the intoxicating experience of 'sexuality'. This is a sample of Simon writing 'woman's' 'sexuality,' which some people may feel is an impossible task for a male writer to do. One must bear in mind that he does show women to be aware of their own 'sexuality'.

l'épaisse broussaille de poils noirs et humides [LC:107]

Black arises from the dark surroundings of the night, where the couple copulate as does the description of dampness. This is also representative of sexual excitement.

forte odeur [...] *l'humus monte de l'épaisse toison noire* [LC:143]

A group of walkers strolling past fishermen is described, then the text moves directly into a description of coitus, which emerges from a similarity of sense.

sa main erre et se crispe dans la *chevelure* de l'homme [LC:101]

Additionally *fruit* is used to describe 'woman's ' sex:

ouverte comme un *fruit* [RF:276]

pêche [RF:276]

Flowers are also employed, suggesting additionally deflowering and the delicacy of 'woman':

lappant sa chose *rose* [RF:242]

[seins] *lilas* [RF:264]

pétales [RF:275]

...dentelle délicate et compliquée s'échappant comme si c'était la *parfum* même de sa chair, de sa gorge cahcée plus bas dans la soyeuse obscurité, s'exhalant, la *secrète haleine de fleur de sa chair...* [RF:179]

This points to the mysteriousness of 'woman's' 'sexuality'.

bout *rose* de sa langue [BP:214]

lèvres cyclamen [HI:275]

rosie au milieu des *langues d'herbe* [HI:274]

écrase la *fleur* [TR:53]

chair plissée comme les *pétales d'une fleur sombre* [LC:149]

l'étroite bouche *mauve pâle*, semblable à un *délicat pétale froissé* [HE:249]

'Woman's' sexuality is conceived as *delicate, fragile and flower-like*:

respirant *le souffle sorti de l'obscur fleur noire* des lèvres, le visage tout entier *comme une espèce de fleur noire* [RF:90]

Georges' mind moves between the cattle truck and the bed in which he lies with Corrine and he realizes the head above his is Corrine's, rather than another prisoner's by the sensuality of her warmth and smell.

respirant seulement son *odeur de fleur* [RF:225]

la chair tout entière *comme des plumes, de l'herbe, de feuilles* [RF:229]

...Iglésia passant sans la regarder [...] sur le dos cette casaque *rose* qui semblait laisser derrière lui comme le sillage *parfum de sa chair* à elle, comme si elle avait pris une de ces soyeuse lingerie et la lui avait jetée dessus, encore imprégnée de l'odeur de son corps... [RF:22]

This recalls the steeplechase and equestrian-woman motif. Corrine's smell is reminiscent of a flower's perfume and a horse's. This all combines to become very sensual.

teintée de *rose abricot* au talon [BP:198]

à l'intérieur on peut voir sa langue *rose* [BP:199]

...(elle pareille - avec son corps caché sous les rigides baleines des corsets, les rigides et bruissantes jupes [...] à l'un de ces hauts murs bordant une rue, impénétrables, hautains, secrets, dont seuls dépassent les sommets de *touffes de lauriers* ou de *camélias* [...] *verdures* ... [HI:20]

The mother is conceived as sexually impenetrable at a younger age through *vegetal* imagery, which is indicated through her clothing and culminates in an image of an inviolable garden. *Histoire* concentrates on the mother figure more than any other novel. Here the notion of

incomplete visibility is strong. The mother's sexuality can not be acknowledged and is thus presented. It shows her repressing her sexuality towards her son and men in general. This connects the notion that the root of one's origins are discovered and can be both quite horrifying and fascinating. (Refer to one's origins in the abstract category.)

Les ombrelles aux couleurs pastels [...] sous lesquelles s'abritent les femmes oscillent de façon désordonnée, comme des *fleurs* [LC:18]

The *clothing* of women plays an important part in defining and exuding their 'sexuality' and more often than not this is imprinted with *birds* and *flowers*:

bouts *rose* pâle comme une enflure comme l'auréole d'un abcès se soulevant et s'abaissant respirant le bouquet de *lierre* au parfum [HI:92]

As a young girl, Corrine stands by a faucet and the narrator is aware of her sexuality. She is perceived as sexual from a young age. He notices her lips parting and her dress gaping².

robes de ce *rouge* qui semblait fait s'accorder avec la couleur de ses *cheveux*, son corps [RF:46]

...la transparence de la capeline *cerise* qui rosissait son visage, son gorge, la haut de ses bras dénudés jusqu'aux aisselles (laissant voir, à la jonction de l'épaule et des seins ces deux plis en éventail, délicats, de la chair impétueuse, dure, gonflée) par une de ces espèces robes [...] plus indécente qu'une chemise de nuit (ou plutôt qui sur toute autre femme eût été indécente mais qui, sur [Corrine], était quelque chose d'au-delà de l'indécence, c'est-à-dire supprimant, privant de sens toute idée de décence ou d'indécence... [RF:138]

Corrine's name provides a major clue to her identity. **Coral** is scientifically defined as part of the animal kingdom and is described as 'an invertebrate having a saclike body with a single

opening (mouth).'³ Other references to *coral* establish this, but develop further the resemblance to a womb and a cervix or vagina. These combine to show Corrine as the perfect specimen of female sexuality. The colour red relates battle and 'sexuality' and also finds its way to Hélène in *Histoire* via flowers, fruit and blood.

Here specifically Corrine's dress describes her character and thus through her name, previous associations and the immediate example of *coral and cherries* stimulates the thought of Corrine in the narrator's mind, even if indirectly passed on through Iglésia and entirely fabricated in parts.

rubans qui entourent les chapeaux de *paille* des femmes sont ornés de *fleurs* ou de *fruits* artificiels (des *violettes*, des *pensées*, une *grappe de cerises*) [LC:23]

The use of '*cerise*' recalls Corrine and images of her as sexual. (Refer to 'cherry' and 'horse' in the nutritional and abstract categories respectively)

[*rosea*] placée entre feminal et palmula comme une unique source de couleur [HI:123]

This colour links all the female characters to the narrator, not just because of its immediate sexual connotations, but because it gathers the bouquet of flowers in the mother's room, the rose pattern on the carpet, roses on the priest vestments, memories of his wife, and the childhood episodes with Corrine. However, finally it is revealed as no more than a word.

bouquet que tient la petite fille est composé de *scabieuses*, de *pissenlits* et de *marguerites* des *champs* [LC:23]

The use of '*pissenlits*' imbues this passage with strong sexual overtones, based contentiously on the definition of '*pissenlits*' established. (Refer to man's sex in the vegetal category.)

A travers le voile transparent contre [...] son visage ressemble à une *délicate* porcelaine aux traits estompés par un *brouillard couleur d'herbe* [LC:97]

A woman strolling on the cliff edge wears a veil, which hides her delicate features, but her struggle with the veil, represents the struggle with the man who pursues her and her delicate features indicate her vulnerability. (Refer to submission in the abstract category.)

Drawn from the *liquid* and *visceral* world 'woman's' sex emerges as mysterious and comforting:

liquide tiédeur du ventre [RF:179]

les rivières souterraines les *cavernes* [RF:274]

(Refer to the fish section of animal category)

DESIRE

Il y a peu de femmes dont la mérité dure plus que la beauté ⁴

With Simon one woman comes to echo another as for the instance the aspects of one old woman are attributed to another and are more or less developed in subsequent novels. Women and men share the same concerns, but ultimately woman is represented as an object of desire.

The first stirring of the sexual impulse is characterized by the presence, real or imagined of a desirable object - 'woman'. Smell, hearing, sight and taste are signals of this and have an intensely sexual value. This object of desire is not 'sexuality' in itself but 'sexuality' works through it. Theoretically a man could well be just as much of an object of desire, however in Simon the first step is usually taken by a man pursuing a woman. Men take the initiative and woman inspire the desire. Women are not necessarily more beautiful or desirable but are more open to be desired. In so far as she is attractive she is at the mercy of man's desire. Beauty is subjective of course, but it varies on a common theme, which is the quality of youth and representation of an ideal specimen.

Simon recognizes the effect of time on women and 'sexuality' and this manifests itself quite freely in the texts. Simon confronts man's apparent conviction that once a woman is no longer capable of arousing men that she has fulfilled her purpose and that once time has done its deed she becomes even more interchangeable than ever. Simon's women are enmeshed in elaborately constructed denial systems. In so doing they engage in the most serious kind of self-deception by attempting to evade the full impact of the passage of time that confirms the mortality of the human mind and body. The essence of their world is a refusal of reality.

Women aging are opposed to the young and the sexual. The ravishing effect of time on the body is highlighted in women who lavish so much care on their bodies and making themselves desirable. Descriptions drawn from the natural world shows 'time' superimposing its presence and passage. Men are also vulnerable to decay, but the Simonian narrator is male and hence noticeably the object of decay in its desirability is portrayed through women.

Death images prevail when their sexuality and desirability and grace leaves them. In *L'Herbe* there is the one and only woman narrator and the emergent representation is the same, perhaps with more empathy.

It is important to highlight the 'non-sexual' and the 'sexual' so as to show the abundance of the 'sexual' and its importance to men. Also it is expounds much on the nature of 'time' in relation to 'sexuality'. There are numerous examples pointing to the very difference. Ultimately this is what defines 'woman' and is often brought to light by juxtaposing the two.

Once old, when the feminine element escapes 'woman', she loses her desirability, the way *flowers* and *vegetables* lose their *freshness* and *vitality*. The *old* are described as *withered* and the colours of yellow and grey figure strongly. They take the

form of roots and branches with their wrinkles and deformed shapes:

masque *jaune* et *desséché* [RF:252]

mêmes *végétations* clairsemées grisâtres sur les mêmes tempes grisâtres [HI:26]

mêmes vieux cous les mêmes *fanons* [HI:27]

D'énormes veines d'un bleu tirant sur le *vert serpentent* en relief et *se nouent* sous la peau, comme des *racine* [TR:161]

doigts déformés, semblables à des *bâtonnets de bois sec* avec leurs *noeuds* et *l'écorce ridée* de la peau [HE:62-63]

Flowers and faded scents are employed:

...odeur de *bouquets flétris* qui semble flotter en permanence dans les chambres des vieilles dames autour des miroirs où se reflètent leurs visages usés, comme l'exhalaison discrète, fragile et un peu rance des jours fanés... [HE:20]

à partir de modèles initiaux vierges de toute *flétrissure* [HE:69]

Flowers are employed to indicate the *ephemerality of beauty*, becoming correlatives of woman's beauty. Blossom is correlative with the young and desirable and decay is correlative with the old:

Il dit Ce que pouviez être *fraîche* Franchement vous étiez *éblouissante* [TR:52]

There is an indication that this figure is possibly Corrine because of childhood references. She always the supremely sexual and desirable now is subjected to prostituting herself to save her son and her beauty is fading.

épanouie [RF:265]

toujours semblable à un *iris*, c'est-à-dire exhalant, cette déchirante mélancolie des *fleurs fanées* [HE:212]

Louise views Sabine and thus views women according to the old and young, juxtaposing the two quite regularly. Her observations are never as directly sexual as the male narrators. She is indeed not so fascinated directly by men and women's sex, but as the novel progresses one comes to realize that she does define women, whether this be through men or not, as 'sexual' or 'non-sexual'. We learn much about the nature and status of woman through a description of a displaced sexuality and their positioning in lives in relation to men - their definition is always dependent on the 'look' of men and how they decide to place themselves sexually.

fleurs délicates, flamboyantes et éphémères [HE:259]

déchirante et périssable beauté des *fleurs* [HE:260]

je pouvais sentir cette *odeur de jeune fille, de fleur* [...] mais il n'y avait rien. Rien que cet entêtant et sans doute imaginaire *parfum de fraîcheur, de virginité de temps accumulé* [HE:11-12]

Louise even perceives the young in terms of perfume and flowers. She perceives 'sexuality' to be defined by youth and time as she discusses the aged Marie.

une jeune fille, *les effluves de jasmin*, et ce corps prêt à tomber en poussière, si familier du temps qu'il semble le temps lui-même [HE:12]

l'entêtant parfum des poires tombées pourissant [HE:22]

Rotting pears are associated with the dying Marie who is outside of 'sexuality' her whole life and they are associated with the very morbid atmosphere of her death. This is also a smell associated by Georges with the old spinster aunts he visited as a child. He describes his visits as entrances into a Pharaonic tomb. Both women as being outside of 'sexuality'.⁵

...femme (pas encore vieille alors, elle non plus, du moins pas aussi près de la vieillesse que lui, vêtue de clair - trop clair -, le visage coloré aussi, ou plutôt colorié, ses cheveux blonds - qui allaient devenir *orangés*, puis, plus tard encore, *orangé-rouge* - à ce moment à peine jaunis, un long collier - trop long - tressautant sur sa poitrine en même temps qu'à ses doigts les bagues - trop nombreuses, trop grosses - lançaient des éclats durs, brefs, aigus, minéraux, dans la *molle et végétale lumière du jardin* ...[HE:32]

Everything about Sabine is excessive as she attempts to recapture youth by fabricated beauty. This is even before she is old and this process accelerates with age. She is juxtaposed with the luxuriant natural beauty of the garden, which is mostly a telling correlation with the sexually desirable woman⁶.

...la vieille bouche peinte tétant avidement, directement au goulot - avec son élégante typographie le nom (peut-être en élégante typographie le nom (peut-être, dans l'entremêlement des *branches de cerisiers en fleurs* et des oiseaux exotiques que délicates pattes couleur de corail, <<Mitsouko>>, ou peut-être encore <<Désir>>, ou peut-être même - qi sait? - <<lvresse>> et le flacon lui-même en forme de hanches, de seins, comme une voluptueuse équivoque, allusion, illusion... [HE:182-183]

Sabine is grasping onto that intoxication of 'sexuality' and youth which she is so crudely juxtaposed with. The bottle and her alcoholism is representative of displaced 'sexuality'.

ce n'étaient plus deux vieilles conversant sous *l'arbre parmi l'éblouissante et lumineuse végétation* de l'été, mais une vieille femme peinte et une vieille dame [HE:55]

This emphasizes acceptance of aging on Marie's part and the denial on Sabine's part (Refer to the discussion on Louise, Marie and Sabine in the abstract category.)

Again 'woman' is represented as dressed in clothing imprinted with *flowers* and *birds*, which serve to either heighten 'sexuality' or to highlight its passing:

entortillées dans un châle décoré de *fleurs* [HI:167]

elle donc, debout parmi la neige de *fleurs printanières*, l'éternel et silencieux *gazouillis des oiseaux exotiques* [HE:170]

corsages aux suaves teinté de *fleurs* haletantes [HI:341]

This arises from a framework of soldiers and whores, thus extending the woman dressed in florals to incorporate the prostitute, who is perhaps the prototype of the feminine attitude of dressing themselves for the purpose of being desired - only prostitution comprises a commercial and business proposition.

`Sexual' and `Non-Sexual'

Both the barn-girl and Corrine are described as supremely sexual, particularly Corrine as she is viewed over her entire life, nor is she merely a vision like the former. Corrine is there to be desired and possessed. Bataille suggests that prostitution is a logical consequence of the feminine attitude in the care 'woman' lavishes on her toilet. In her concern for setting her beauty off with adornment she regards herself as an object always trying to attract men's attention. Often the narrators fear the woman or the transgression involved but the inevitable fact is they are drawn to her, the fascination compelling it.

It is evident from Georges' description that he regards Corrine as something less than and more than a person - she becomes an idea, a fantasy and is representative of the sexual woman, that is the prototypical real or unreal object of desire. The Simonian women of all categories can be related back to their place within or outside of 'sexuality', but they are all 'types' with variations. There are the supremely sexual, often nymphomaniac, the young, virginal and awkward girls who submit to the power of the sexual force and the very old who are rather masculine and have become ridiculous as they attempt to replace natural beauty with synthetic beauty. Then there are those who have remained entirely outside of 'sexuality', often by their own choice. In *La Route des Flandres* Georges derides his mother for her attempt to retain lost beauty, this being Sabine.

There really does not seem to be any middle ground for women, they like all else in Simon are discussed in extreme conditions, so as to highlight the eternal and cyclical nature of life. They do in fact embody a very stereotyped and masculine fantasy and play of desires. What defines a woman is her 'sexuality' as it is defined and interpreted by men. No characters, with the exception of Louise are based it seems on familiar real-life models as they stand too close for comfort to the author's private experience. Such a thesis is backed up by various comments made by the narrator's, not necessarily drawing from the named categories.

The *sexual women* are symbols of the sexual power of women, and they are in the minds of the narrator as old as the act of procreation itself, as when Georges describes Corrine as ageless:

elle était non seulement une femme mais la femme la plus femme qu'il eût encore jamais vue, même en imagination [RF:132]

...il lui sembla qu'il avait devant lui non pas une enfant, ou une jeune femme, ou une vieille femme, mais une femme sans âge, comme une addition de toute les femmes, vieilles ou jeunes ...[RF:139]

où elle (Corrine) se tenait, irréaliste, incroyable elle aussi malgré son lourd parfum, sa voix [RF:224]

Non-sexual women are also described:

son contrait ou plutôt sa négation ou plutôt sa corruption la corruption même de l'idée de femme de grâce de volupté, son châtement : une effroyable vieille à profil et barbiche de bouc [RF:252]

la vieille femme (dont l'aspect physique, les vêtements et la fragilité avaient été si longtemps associés pour moi à l'idée même de cadavre de mort [BP:124]

Women are conceived as a summation of their sexual parts:

...comme si toute cette interminable chevauchée nocturne n'avait eu d'autre raison, d'autre but que la découverte à la fin de cette *chair diaphane* [...] non pas une femme mais l'idée même, le symbole de toute femme [...] sommairement façonnés dans la tendre argile deux cuisses un ventre deux seins la ronde colonne de cou et au creux des replis [...] cette *bouche herbue*... [RF:39]

...Sur son bras à la peau laiteuse est dessiné un tatouage d'un bleu délavé à peine lisible, et où l'on devine, naïvement figuré, le corps d'une sirène. La morphologie du visage n'est indiquée que par trois taches imprécises, indiquant la place des yeux et de la bouche dans l'ovale qui s'arrondit sous l'opulente chevelure ondoyant de chaque côté du buste jusqu'au bas de la taille où prend naissance une queue relevée sur la droites. Les écailles de la queue terminée par une sorte d'éventail bifide sont figurées au moyen d'un lacs de traits pâles qui s'entrecroisent, évoquant les mailles d'un filet. Deux parenthèses couchées, comme deux cupules, soulignant chacune un point, figurent les seins... [LC:156]

A mermaid is described in similar terms to women, thus indicating little personality on the part of women, but also their reduction to an image.

Je ne savais pas que l'honneur était fendu par le milieu avec du poil autour [RF:258]

(Refer to the riddle in the horse section of the animal category.)

...Le gamin entoure ensuite l'ovale de rayons divergents, comme ceux d'un soleil, ou des cils autour d'un oeil. De temps en temps il jette de rapides regards [...] pour s'assurer personne ne vient...[BP:206]

(Refer to the riddle in the horse section of the animal category.)

...dessine au centre de l'oeil et dans le sens de l'axe le plus long un signe en forme de V, renversé aux branches très fermées [...] il fait aller et venir plusieurs fois sa main à demi

refermée sur un invisible tuyau perpendiculairement à son entrejambe en même temps qu'il donne de petits coups de reins d'avant en arrière... [BP:207]

The boys are aware sexually and draw a woman as fundamentally sexual. This causes one of them to masturbate and then the two boys wrestle in a "*bouquet d'orties*". This is reminiscent of the struggle shown in sexual coupling. (Refer to the struggle and submission sections of the abstract category.) This enters again into the realm of the hole motif. (Refer to the fish section of the animal category.)

Rien que de la peau, des cheveux, des muqueuses ? Mais quoi encore? [HI:283]

This indicates the mysteriousness of a 'woman's' sexuality. Her 'sexuality' is brought under close scrutiny and parts of the woman are described clinically, as the make-up of a stone is described as just flint, lime and drops of water. There is this mysterious element which fascinates the Simonian narrator however. This is indicative of the phrase 'comment savoir' of which *La Route des Flandres* is replete, referring more to historical knowledge, but the term 'comment écrire la sexualité?' is obviously valid on a personal scale.

Women's beauty is replaced synthetically as they age:

...pensant qu'elle devait en être aussi arrivée à peu près à cet état maintenant : la même surabondance, le même trop- plein de bijoux, de fards, de paroles, comme elles font toutes quand ça commence à les abandonner et qu'elles cherchent pas quoi elles pourraient bien y remédier, essayant de emplacer l'éclat de leur peau, de leur chair, de leurs yeux par des éclats de voix, de scintillements métalliques ou de bouts de verre. Peut-être un peu moins maquillée, ou plus illement, peut-être un peu moins tapageuse [...] A part cela, la même chose : c'est-à-dire cet imperceptible décalage, ce désaccord naissant entre l'enveloppe externe, qu'elle soit peau ou tissus, et ce qu'elle recouvre : comme un flottement comme si déjà commençait à se séparer, se défaire éléments premiers [...] ce tout compact, indifférenciable, qu'elle sont à vingt ans [...] Une espèce d'anarchie [...] Jusqu'à ce qu'elles soient p que quelques tas d'étouffes sombres, quelques replis de peau jaune toute froissée [...] ahuries de ce qui leur est arrivé sur

les fauteuils jonquille d'un salon [...] Mais pour le moment le niant encore. Ou s'efforçant de le nier, de le dissimuler sous les fards, les robes trop voyantes et ces bavardages haletants, fébriles... [HI:156-158]

Even Corrine the supremely sexual woman is subject to decay. This is indeed not the only passage which illustrates the fading of beauty and 'sexuality', but it is representative and places the reader in its obvious juxtapositions of old and young and the extent women go to cover up their aging.

FABRICATION

The tenuous situation the men are in causes them to *fabricate* and thus extremes and rudimentary view of woman emerge. The fantasizing male often does come to realize he is the prisoner of his own fantasies. Again this is not an extraction of the categories of language proposed but is fundamental to the imagery which does emerge. The men have fantasies of violent sex and it seems it is better to discuss them than deny them.

At the end of his *recollections* of his wartime experience, Georges begins to express *doubts* regarding the reality of everything when he was in the *camp and deprived of women*:

...il me [Corrine] semble qu'il n'est pas très difficile à deviner il me semble qu'il n'est pas très difficile de se figurer à quoi peuvent penser pendant cinq ans un tas d'hommes *privés de femmes*, à peu près quelque chose dans le genre de ce qu'on voit dessiné sur les murs des cabines téléphoniques ou des toilettes des cafés je pense que c'est *normal* je pense qu c'est la

chose la plus naturelle mais dans ces sortes de dessins on ne représente jamais les figures ça s'arrête en général au cou quand ça arrive jusque-là... [RF:190]

This shows fabrication under such conditions to be natural. Corrine's objection is to the drawings but is not particularly consistent or persuasive. Georges fails to understand this as he fails to understand in the end anything of his search, except as it presented itself at the time of his thought.⁷

...elle maintenant non plus inventée (comme disait Blum) - ou plutôt fabriquée pendant les longs mois de guerre, de captivité, de continence forcée, à partir d'une brève et unique vision un jour de concours hippique, des racontars de Sabine ou des bribes de phrases (elles-mêmes représentant des bribes de réalité), de confidences ou plutôt de grognements à peu près monosyllabiques arrachés à force de patience et de ruse à Iglésia, ou à partir d'encore moins : d'une gravure qui n'existait même pas, d'un portrait peint cent cinquante ans plus tôt...), mais telle qu'il pouvait la voir maintenant... [RF:217]

When Georges does in fact have an affair with Corrine he brings all his past experiences with him and her body is the way in which he additionally remembers, that is it acts as a 'route' through its sensuousness and its relationships to other objects and leads only to questioning and no ultimate knowledge.⁸

Qu'avais je cherché en elle espéré poursuivi jusque sur son corps dans son corps [RF:278]

...pensant qu'après tout elle avait peut-être avait raison et que ce ne serait pas de cette façon c'est-à-dire avec elle ou plutôt à travers elle que j'y arriverais (mais comment savoir?... [RF:278])

MOTHER-EARTH

'Woman' becomes correlative with the *earth*, drawing language based upon the *mother-earth* motif, which indicates the balance between the *destruction* and *comfort* or *production of life*. This imagery serves to create a system of ritualistic elements, themes and symbols, based through all time and can be associated with the typical and timeless behavioural patterns. Metaphorically speaking the earth is primarily perceived as the great archetypal feminine because of what is contained, sheltered and nourished in her. She shelters, protects and nourishes and in death she offers comfort as she calls man back to her protective womb and assuages his fears. More often than not she emerges as tormenting and brutalizing and ultimately feeds on the corpse with indifference. As a result nature is never more than a momentary and deceptive refuge, a parallel of the sexual woman in coitus and her dual nature. Mercilessly exposed to the earth during wartime, Georges is magnetically drawn back to the earth, which he reluctantly recognizes as his place of origin and return. Earth marks the cyclical nature of all things living. Individual life and death is inconsequential when staged against a larger cosmic backdrop and this is the premise of the cosmological aggression in this discussion:

(matrice) originelle [RF:230]

(Refer to that dealing with the womb in the animal, abstract and nutritional categories.)

moule poulpe [RF:39]

This describes 'woman's' sex as devouring and destructive.

MAN'S SEX

As vegetation becomes correlative of women's sex and defines a typology of 'woman', man's sex is also used in correlation with vegetation. His sex is subject to decline, which images from the natural world show, but more than anything it is shown as aggressive and powerful and indeed seems to be so powerful as to have a strangulating effect. The *grass-roots* of his existence is the phallus, it defines and rules his life and is the subject of much anxiety and pleasure.

Generally man's sex is described in *vegetal* terms, pertaining mostly to *pubic hair* and the *grass family*:

au centre, ce *buisson*, cette *touffe*, cette *tache sombre* [RF:83]

tache fauve imprécise se détachant sur la peau [BP:76]

A soldier is described, thus associating 'sexuality', vegetation and battle.

cette sorte de *broussaille* ce *buisson* de flammes sombres, désordonnées, marron roux, au centre du corps gigantesque et pâle [BP:135]

A gladiator is described, again bringing together the war motif, sexuality and the vegetal category. The positioning of this passage also makes implicit the undergrowth on the fields of Thessaly and 'sexuality'.

fourreau [BP:212]

buisson de poils [BP:77]

taches de rousseur ses poils roux dessinant une ligne *broussailleuse* qui devise son ventre en deux [BP:119]

broussaille de poils jaunes [BP:120]

poils jaunes [BP:213]

tache fauve imprécise se détachant sur la peau [BP:76]

A soldier is described thus associating 'sexuality', vegetation and battle⁹.

...Sortant presque des lèvres de la vulve apparaît parfois le gland *violacé* aussitôt disparu. Il faut remonter plus haut dans les *bois* pour trouver la jeune *sapinière*. Entre les *troncs* minces, serrés et roses [...] [*mousserons*] ont une *queue* blanche portant une *tête bombée d'un brun violacé* ...[TR:20-21]

coupoles ont un aspect vaguement *phallique*, rappelant les têtes de certains *champignons* [TR:36]

This connects the two images and imbues quite explicitly the original image with phallic connotations, even though this architectural description is a seemingly distinct frame of description. Love is often treated obliquely such as through paronomastics such as '*coupe*' and '*culpa*' which passes through the '*cupule*,' a botanical term designating the sheath which holds for example a '*gland*' - which in french is an acorn and is a popular synonym for the penis¹⁰.

Man's sex is overpowering and alien:

arbre poussant ramifiant ses racines [RF:243]

tige sortie de moi [RF:243]

lierre griffu se glissant le long de mon dos [RF:243]

arbre sortant de moi [RF:275]

bourgeon, tendu à se rompre [HI:110]

pissenlits [RF:244]¹¹

racine [RF:244]

corps *emperlés* [RF:244]

glands [RF:244]

cette tête ce *bourgeon au bourrelet violacé* [BP:46]

couronne plissée rose vif [BP:46]

couvert d'un lacs d'un réseau entrelacs rouge *amarante* [HI:343]

bourgeon tendu [TR:161]

The text then progresses to a description of rabbits being fed after this description of the penis has occurred within the frame of oral sex, thus connecting the phallus and the rabbit motif with its subsequent associations.

Painting and vegetation emerge in the representation of 'sexuality' because of the associations made between the penis and the bristles of the paintbrush, which emerge from the *hair and grass* correlation. The action of painting is connected to 'sexuality' as its brush and paint are likened to blood and the inflamed ball of the brush to grass. It additionally contributes to the descriptive technique used in that one is never entirely sure if it is a painting or lovers being described, as the former becomes animated and the latter frozen. Descriptions of 'sexuality' are not restricted to the ephemeral state of physical coupling, but this is at the centre. 'Sexuality' overflows into multifarious frames:

...le pinceau soumise aux imperceptible tremblements aux imperceptibles palpitations du sang qui l'irrigue et des muscles qui la soutiennent [...] dessinant une sorte de boule de bourgeon enflammé rouge vif... [BP:58]

Quelquefois les *soies* trop appuyées bavaient et des franges bite rouge dans son [BP:180]

les *soies du pinceau tournant maintenant sur sa place* dessinant à l'extrémité du trait une *boule rouge que se gonflait* [BP:180]

Partant de la *broussaille de poils jaunâtres* qui couvre la poitrine une ligne ébouriffée divise le torse en deux et rejoint le *buisson roux* qui flamboie au bas du ventre [BP:212]

Linear descriptions of coitus abound, particularly in *La Bataille de Pharsale*. Here painting and 'sexuality' become affiliated through past language and of course within just this passage.

BACKGROUND TO SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

The *steeplechase* acts as background, for it is established as a thematic and metaphorical clutch for sexuality and therefore because of the associations made between pubic hair and the **grass** and vegetal circle of metaphors for pubic hair, the presence of greenery is associatively meaningful in its sexual connotations. It also is a founding stone in establishing 'woman's' 'sexuality' and sensuality through the horse-woman and coitus correlatives established in the animal and the abstract categories:

l'épaisseur verte des frondaisons [RF:18]

le paisible et vert après-midi aux *effluves de fleurs*, de crottin et de *parfums* [RF:19]

les lourds *feuillages* des *maronniers* [RF:19]

se détachant sur le vert inimitable des opulents *maronniers*, presque noir [RF:21]

Imaginant quelque chose avec de *l'herbe des feuillages* (peut-être à cause de course des haies)
[HI:341]

[membre] dans le *verdoisement des buissons* [HI:342]

Grass and its extensions often act as a *sign* that *coitus* has occurred:

ou encore lui souille et crotté, des *traînées de terre* ou *d'herbe écrasée*, vert-jaune, sur sa culotte [RF:47]

Iglésia and Corrine have made love in the stables and Georges believes that he can almost hear the faint panting of a woman as he lies in the **grass**.

Coitus occurs directly within the *vicinity of grass*:

accouplés sur *l'herbe* [BP:159]

s'accouplaient à l'abri *de guirlandes de fleurs et de feuillages jaunis* [HI:272]

This may be the artist, uncle or narrator making love. *Foliage* even makes its way into the artist's studio and the foliage reflects back to descriptions of pubic hair.

déflorée parmi les fleurs sylvestres [HI:343]

...découvrant après sous ma veste que j'avais étendue pour qu'elle se couche dessus *l'herbe aplatie* par le poids de nos corps les *brins entrecroisés* se soulevant alors légèrement [...] comme une lente et *végétale respiration*... [HI:342]

The movement of the **grass** is personified and is correlated with the mingling of the bodies and the notion of *crushed grass* rising after orgasm is representative of the awareness of time and solitariness invading the bodies again. The **grass** breaks free as the two bodies break free of each other. (Refer to post-coital experience and the paroxysmic nature of the sexual experience in the abstract category and additionally the **grass** section of that category.)

brins de fourrage [TR:159]

A couple in the barn make love while this is strewn about. The connection between *vegetation*, 'sexuality' and its primal nature is made merely by mentioning this animal aspect of the barn,

thus embracing the entire component of generators, motifs and associations which comes with that territory.

Elle dit d'une voix entrecoupée je vous en prie [...] pas ici *l'herbe* est toute *mouillé* [LC:133]

Grass, greenery and extensions of these often obscurely appear as a backdrop to the sexual encounter or to sexuality, which is established as a result of other associations made more explicitly in this order and across the other orders:

ombres d'un *vert* léger jade courant sur la peau [BP:47]

elle avait lu environ une trentaine de pages [...] arrivée apparemment au plus épais de la *forêt vierge des bambous* [BP:177]

A traveller in *La Bataille de Pharsale* observes a woman passenger reading a romantic novel and makes observations from the illustration on the cover.

L'harmonie générale du tableau repose sur l'accord des *verts* sombres et du *rose* chaud, légèrement grisé, des corps nus [BP:226]

This is a description of a painting representing women, pregnant women, children and warrior lying or standing in **grass**. The emphasis is on this area of the painting. Violent images of weapons, conquerors and the vanquished emerge with a constant background of *foliage* and *trees*. This connects sexuality, reproduction, war and foliage. There are descriptions elsewhere of postcards, such as those O. selects to write on which an armored man rides through foliage of

bushes and trees on a white horse. This is reminiscent of the associations described with horses in both the abstract and animal categories.

...deux personnages à demi nus la femme tenant un *rameau feuillu* [...] lui quelque part au milieu non pas *d'arbres de forêts* mais de quelque chose d'innommable *une mousse géante* une indistincte prolifération de *tiges* et de *feuilles* entremêlées et non pas *verte* mais grisâtre suintant tout suintant les *feuilles* les *troncs* la peau visqueuse la sueur coulant le long des *membres des branches* ...[HI:22]

A representation on a stamp has reflections of the description of the sexual act and experience.

centaines de petites *feuilles ovales* [HI:41]

Outside the window of the narrator the leaves on a tree correspond to the shape proposed in the riddle in *La Bataille de Pharsale* relating to woman's 'sexuality'.

...missives empreintes ou plutôt *parfumées* de la lourde sensualité qui semble émaner de cette langue des noms des mots eux-mêmes avec leurs consonances lascives et brutales leurs *senteur poivrée d'oeillet* et d'encens mêlés les exhalaisons langoureuses et un peu moites des chairs virginales des blancheurs des virginales sauvages noires et secrètes *toisons*... [HI:31-32]

The mystery of woman's sexuality and sex are mixed. Words themselves are impregnated with a certain sexuality and this is indicative of how Simon's work is effected. (Refer to '*libidineux*' in the nutritional category)

envahi par *l'herbe* [...] *découpage en forme de pétales* [HI:52]

One of the postcards sent to the narrator's mother as a young woman by one of her admirers is reflected upon by the narrator as he tries to imagine what the admirer was imagining at the time he wrote the card and comes up with an image of a woman strolling by ruins, where *vegetation* figures strongly.

...gravure en taille-douce représente l'intérieur d'une grange où une servante est renversée en arrière sur le *foin*, les jambes écartées, la jupe relevée sur le ventre découvrant sa vulve dodue et fendue comme un *fruit*... [TR:42]

même *jaune* clair colore indistinctement aussi le *bottes de paille* et les où le valet l'a fait basculer, les *poils blonds du pubis* et les *cheveux bouclés de l'uns des garçons* penchés à la lucarne [TR:43-44]

Hair and hay have an associative and a binding effect, not deferring from the distinctiveness of the categories.

filles remet un peu d'ordre dans sa *coiffure* [TR:187]

It may seem rather obscure, but the notion of the woman putting order to her hair is indicative of the order that has returned after the sexual act and hair is a symbol of the order disrupted in the sexual act.

descendant la pente du *verger* [LC:18]¹²

agite [...] un *rameau feuillu* [LC:18]

feuilles de noyer froissées s'exhale un parfum entêtant [LC:18]

canotier de *paille* brillante, dont les large brins [LC:18]

bouquet de fleurs de champs [LC:18]

folle avoine [LC:18]

graminées [LC:18]

sillon irrégulier au fond duquel *l'herbe* ne se relève lentement [LC:18]

This is a description of women in an impressionist painting and those taking a walk along the sea-side cliff which merge. The latter appear as a painting because of brush strokes described but the whole description becomes sensual and is underscored with sexual suggestion, in light of descriptions used elsewhere to describe **grass** in the sexual act and the phallus being associated with sticks and vegetation.

faucher de sa canne les *tiges des ombelles* [LC:34-35]

The cane takes on phallic connotations as the man definitely makes his presence felt to the woman.¹³ Additionally the umbrella held by the woman becomes phallic. (Refer to the dragon section in the animal category.) This also recalls the old woman in *Triptyque* who mows down the **grass** with a scythe and then kills the rabbit, which contains sexual overtones by way of the generative networks established. (Refer to the rabbit sections in the abstract and animal jories).

le bord *herbu* de la falaise [LC:92]

elle peut sentir l'odeur *poivrée des géraniums* [LC:37]

...elle sent l'odeur des *foins* coupés mêlée à celle des *prés* [...] sent la consistance *moeulleuse de la pelouse* sous son pied elle jette un dernier regard à la maison et se met à courir... [LC:41]

elle peut distinguer la dentelle noire et déchiquetée des *feuillages* sur le ciel moins noir [LC:46]

elle peut maintenant sentir de nouveau le parfum tiède des *foins* [LC:50]

Woman leaves a child behind in order to meet her lover and this is another indication that it is the same woman concerned about her child on the cliff edge. Transgression often transpires amidst of *foliage*, that is an elemental force with the background of elements, as it is in *Triptyque* when the lovers meet in the hay of the barn and the servant-girl has left the little child behind who drowns. (Refer to transgression in the abstract category.)

voûtes noires des *feuillages* [LC:109]

[allumette] Il la laisse tomber et elle s'éteint dans *l'herbe*. Tout est complètement noir [LC:173]

The affair has taken place in the **grass** and when it is finished the light and **grass** is no longer visible.

visages, leurs yeux, tous les deux cachés dans *l'épaisse et verte obscurité sous les branches immobiles* [HE:16]

Adultery takes place and transgression is suggested as the lovers hide in the dark. Obscurity highlights the anonymity of the sexual act and the secretive aspect. (Refer to transgression, infidelity and loneliness in the abstract category.) This entire text is named *L'Herbe* which marks the importance of *vegetation* as a background to the sexual act and indeed the **grass** becomes personified and intensely sexual as Louise becomes aware of it licking her legs.

l...'herbe, les mince langues d'herbe le long de ses jambes nues mollement balancées [...] hautes graminées, leurs têtes arachnéennes oscillant, flexibles, léchant ses chevilles, les multiples et vertes langues de la terre ... [HE:20]

Grass is personified and the action of licking recalls the motif of cunnilingus and fellatio, women's sex having been likened to **grass** in other texts. This is one-step removed but emerges as a result of the vast metaphorical and associative networks in play.

tiges enlacés, des hélianthès sauvages, l'herbe sauvages et les langues de l'herbe léchant ses jambes nues [HE:126]

This draws in the notion of wildness, which connotes the primal character of the sexual act. (Refer to the animal and abstract categories with regard to the primal nature of the sexual act.)

...c'est le lendemain, et c'est de nouveau le soir, et elle se tient là de nouveau, parmi l'herbe folle, les feuilles, l'ombre, la complice et verte noirceur immobile, emprisonnée sous les branches, mystérieux, clandestine, les deux silhouettes - la sienne fragile, délicate, et l'autre qui la dépasse de toute la tête, et un peu penchée - absolument noires aussi, et presque indistinctes parmi la complication végétation des ronces, la sauvage, l'exubérante végétation, et elle parlant de cette même voix lente, pensive et absente, comme si elle s'adressait non au visage indistinct penché sur elle mais au vide, au noir... [HE:206]

The most intimate experience is heavily imbued with the presence of nature. Infidelity and the awareness of a transgression takes place and the feeling evoked is that of conspiring with the natural world. Also the solitariness of the erotic adventure is stressed, as man is alone with men but is also not one with nature. In the sexual act one comes the closest to this. The 'other' is present here and notably from a woman's perspective.

...pouvant percevoir, incrustés dans son dos, chacun des *brins d'herbe* écrasés, comme si elle pouvait voir (aux saillies de son corps aux omoplates, aux reins) les *taches jaune-vert* sur sa robe claire, *sentant l'odeur, la senteur végétale*, humide, la pénétrante, comme si ce n'était pas de *l'herbe* foulée qu'elle exhalait mais de profondeurs, du sein même de la *terre*, pensant : <<Voilà. Je suis morte>> ...[HE:248]

The notion of the *earth and grass* penetrating Louise is similar to the effect of the sexual experience, thus making **grass** extend to represent the entire experience. (Refer to **grass** section of the abstract category.)

...toujours étendue sans mouvement [...] ne faisant pas un geste pour se couvrir, ne pensant même plus : <<Je suis trop fatiguée>>, regardant l'ombre masculine debout au-dessus d'elle, comme peinte aussi en sombre (*en vert-noir*) sur la verre impénétrable du ciel, et immobile elle aussi tous-les deux restant ainsi plusieurs minutes peut-être, la silhouette verticale découpée sur la crépuscule bougeant à la fin, la flamme de l'allumette éclairant un instant un visage aussi étranger que son propre visage (celui dans la glace, n'avait cessé de l'espionner) quoique ce fût une bouche, un nez, un front d'homme, mais avec ceci en commun : le même regard en train de l'épier... [HE:249]

This emphasizes the look of the 'other' which is strongly felt as a result of the loss of union after the sexual act. Notably again such a description takes place with a strong presence of nature. The coloring of *black* and *green* predominates, especially as the affair takes place within the **grass** and the equation is made between **grass** and *pubic hair*.

...étendue toujours sans mouvement parmi *l'herbe* humide et *piétinée* [...] le froissement menu, délicat, des *brins d'herbe aplatis, couchés*, se décollant l'un après l'autre, commençant à se

relever par d'invisibles et brèves *saccades* [...] le *point rouge* de la cigarette disparaissant dans *l'herbe grise*... [HE:250]

Here the cigarette has phallic connotations and enters into the realm of the hole motif as it disappears into the **grass**, equated with pubic hair and the end of coition. Also the **grass** being flattened is generates the notion of the bodies losing control and the self being obliterated in the act of coition and orgasm and then slowly returning to its own awareness of solitary confinement in this world.

...couchée maintenant de tout son long sur le *sol*, adhérant au *sol*, enfonçant, enfouissant son visage dans *l'herbe* fraîche, comme pour l'y imprimer, respirant longuement l'odeur puissant et âcre *d'herbe et de terre*, mêlées (mais pas les larmes : les yeux fermés, secs), respirant simplement, s'emplissant tout entière de *l'odeur végétale* et pure, puis se relâchant, s'abandonnant, toujours allongée sur le ventre, mais la tête tournée sur le côté, pouvant maintenant sentir s'imprimer dans sa joue les croisillons *d'herbe* écrasée, et devant ses yeux le *pré* s'étendant, au ras de son visage, *l'herbe* multiple et folle se détachant comme des *coups de pinceau à l'encre de Chine* ...[HE:254]

During her entire experience, Louise has failed to notice the sound of Marie's death rattle, but in the post-coital experience the impending and stifling noise is heard. This indicates the oblivion in sexuality and additionally here **grass** is equated with *painting*, thus reminding the reader of all the possibilities bound up with the painting and sexual motif spoken of in the abstract category.

In *L'Herbe* the lush *vegetation* becomes symbolic of the cosmological aggression replete through these novels. It is a threat to all illusions of permanence and stability and becomes symbolic of the *illusion of sexual permanence*:

Personne ne fait l'histoire, on ne la voit pas, pas plus qu'on ne voit *l'herbe* pousser [HE:7, Boris Pasternak]

PENETRATION/SECURITY

'Woman' is the symbolic giver of life and pleasure, but ironically the sexual act is scarcely described as pleasurable. She is the archetypal mother, whereby the narrator seeks to find nourishment warmth and security found in the natural world, which cosmologically can be equally destructive. For the narrator's women do provide temporary individual security in the sexual act but do not satiate them entirely in her role as nourishing and protecting mother. The sexual act does only provide a temporary sanctuary from 'time' over which man has no control.

(Im)penetration of the woman is seen as a *refuge* from the outside world in that one is able to forget one's mortality. The barn of *La Route des Flandres* is central to this image and notably links such a motif to the *vegetation* category:

puis ils furent dans la *grange* [...] *tiède* [...] (pénétrant en même temps dans *l'odeur* âcre des bêtes, *du foin* [RF:36]

TRANSMUTATION

The horse is the central image of transmutation in the novel, and notably **grass and hair** is juxtaposed with such an image. The horse is absorbed into the earth, which is covered with **grass** as the man is absorbed into the woman, who is covered with hair. 'Woman' gives life and takes life and this is shown as the horse's position is representative of the birth position, but absorbed into the earth. The horse feeds off the **grass** and it is in turn eaten by the earth and then this by other creatures. This cyclical notion is also symbolically shown in the hole motif, discussed at length in the fish section of the animal category. This *horse-grass* section is extended too in the horse and dog section of the animal and nutritional categories. **Grass** and *pubic hair* are subjects of fascination for they hide the mystery of the earth and woman's sex, behind its accessible and apparent observations.

...[cheval] ce qui était non un anguleux *amas de boue* [...] [mais] la carcasse, à *demi recouverte, absorbée par sa gangue d'argile* - comme si déjà *la terre avait commencé à la digérer...* [RF:99]

assimilé par la terre profonde qui *cache en elle sous sa chevelure d'herbe et de feuilles* [RF:228]

...fatidique semeuse sur fond bistre aux longs cheveux flottant hors du bonnet phrygien immobilisée éolienne et agreste un bras arrière serrant de l'autre contre sa hanche le sac de graines [...] messagère fécondante et magicienne, comme une de ces statues encore à demi ensevelies émergeant des fouilles sa robe [...] imparfaitement dégagés de la gangue de terre rougeâtre et fertile... [HI:54]

Fertility and the reproductive aspect of the feminine principle is established and this is correlative with the fertile earth. Many of the women in Simon are described in domesticated and agricultural positionings which creates a further bond between 'woman' and nature.

femme lisse exhalant la senteur immobile de la terre [HI:382]

'Woman's' place on the sheet is discernible through the earth principle she carries.

Endnotes

1. The layout of the extractions in this thesis call for explanation.
 - A) Any commentary directly below a quotation pertains directly to that quote. Otherwise the format is standard.
 - B) The system of notation within the extractions is:
 - i) [...] Deletions from the original text
 - ii) [] Clarification within the text due to the extractions
 - iii) (...) Original text
 - iv) ... Placed before and after the extractions, with the exception of lists and concise quotations of less than three lines.

2. This is further illustrated in *Histoire*:

(bras nues dorés sortant de cette robe qu'elle avait retailée de façon à montrer tout ce qui était possible et même en plus [HI:178-179])

3. New Collins Concise English Dictionary

4. Rochefoucauld Maximes 1664, (474)

5. Further representation of this is found in *L'Herbe*:

... comme si elles étaient elles-mêmes deux de ces fragiles et vieillottes poupées de bois se tavelant, se desséchant lentement *dans la permanente et automnale odeur des poires et des pommes* rangées sur les étagères, *se ridant* insensiblement, laissant sourdre comme un relent de mort ...[HE:25]

6. This is elaborated further in *L'Herbe* :

...voix dolente et désespérée ses éternels griefs, comme une boufonne parodie de l'amour [...] obstiné, pathétique [...] ton de femme outragée, torturée, rongée comme par une sorte de

cancer indifférente à la *verte campagne de septembre qui filait de part et d'autre de la route, comme si le ciel, les chaps, les arbres, n'existaient pas* [HE:99]

7. Another pertinent example of this in *La Route des Flandres*:

...[Georges] Tu trouves que je ne suis pas là? [...] [Corrine] dit Non pas avec moi Tout ce que je suis pour toi c'est une fille à soldat quelque chose comme ce qu'on voit dessiné à la craie ou avec un clou sur les murs de casernes dans le plâtre effrité : un ovale partagé en deux et des rayons tout autour comme un soleil ou un oeil vertical fermé entouré de cils et même pas de figure [...] [Georges] arrête veux-tu est-ce que tu peux comprendre est-ce que tu peux imaginer que pendant cinq ans je n'ai rêvé que de toi, et elle : Justement [RF:260]

8. A further example of this is:

...peut-être avait-elle raison [...] Peut-être étais-je toujours en train de lui parler, d'échanger avec un petit juif mort depuis des années des vantardises des blagues des obscénités des mots [...] rien que pour ne pas nous endormir nous donner le change nous encourager l'un l'autre [RF:262]

9. This is further illustrated with:

Cette sorte de broussaille de buisson de flames sombres, desordonnées, marron roux, au centre corps gigantesque et pale [BP:135]

Further into the text a gladiator is described again bring in the war motif, 'sexuality' and 'vegetation'. The positioning of this passage also implies a connection between the undergrowth on the fields of Thessay and 'sexuality'.

10. Gland is defined as, en anatomie, extrémité de la verge et du clitoris'. Such a definition means the scenes in the orchard/'verger' of *Leçon de Choses* transpose to have stronger sexual connotations.

11. 'Pissenlits' is defined as: manger les pissenlits par la racine, être mort et enterré. With such a definition of 'sexuality' and death are juxtaposed within one word.
12. On page 343 of *Histoire* there is a description of a man's member in vegetal terms then this moves to an entirely new experience through the description of bushes and forests leading down to the hillside where a [A *Verge* is a long thin branch but defined also as '*verge pour battre organe érectile, de la copulation, chez l'homme et les mammifères supérieures.*' couple copulate in the **grass**, bordering an orchard, behind some frascati. These connections may seem abstruse but are made very subtly as the penis, vegetation and aggression are related through language.
13. In *Leçon de Choses* pages 27-28 a man ostensibly helps the woman on the seaside to disengage from a bramble or dead branch hidden by the grass. She grows increasingly red and is concerned what the other walkers will think. With this image of a branch which emerges as having phallic connotations, the notion of transgression and adultery is entered upon, suggesting that this may be the same couple as that of the couple copulating in the meadow at night.

CHAPTER TWO

ANIMAL

'Sexuality' emerges as a biological instinct and animal imagery serves to underline this. Throughout the narrators associate themselves and women with various animals. Man considers 'W/woman's' function in the sexual act as a passive participant in a purely mechanistic way and each animal represents a different aspect of the female character and evokes a complementary and instinctual response from the narrator. Animal imagery has an emblematic and descriptive function but additionally it can intervene in the text as a sexual generator, by movement attributed to the animal or a characteristic of that animal.

Above all sexual union is a union of physical bodies, not minds, but there is no suggestion to say that there is not incorporated the anxiety which is inherent in the human sexual act, that is the duality of the mind/body relationship because of this strength of animal imagery. Barriers are transgressed in the sexual act and this strips us down to our bare essentials and thus the ability to communicate at a higher level is dissipated. But the animal imagery concentrates on the animal aspect more so than the other than material in the other categories.

The obscenity or the animal attributed 'sexuality' arises centrally from the uneasiness ascribed to 'sexuality' in its fundamental state. Additionally it is the uneasiness which upsets the physical state associated with well-being.

Additionally the tenuousness of a situation is described and the life/death instinct in 'sexuality' is stressed by reducing man to the state of animals. 'Sexuality' is an instinct and as is abundantly clear, man reverts to natural instincts when deprived of safety and human comforts. *La Route des Flandres* stresses this and thus 'sexuality' emerges unhindered. When sexual acts are described clinically this reflects the animal act and the lack of lead up to the act and entry into the act directly, the lack of modesty in the description and the lack of erotic accompaniment culminates in no sexual desire being elicited. The animality of 'sexuality' fits into Simon's wider thesis of 'sexuality'.

The *ditch and bed* correlation are again to be understood as central transition points for *La Route des Flandres* and aids in an understanding of the dense thematic proliferation based upon the animal theme in subsequent texts.

ANIMAL/BEAST

When threatened by imminent injury or death an alarmed human will act much like a terrified animal. He returns to the conditions of an animal and hence the sexual positioning of the text can be understood. In *La Route des Flandres* men become beasts in a cage, reinforcing the prison camp and the narrator's apprehension of the solitude imminent in life, from which sexual union is only a momentary escape. The phallus becomes a ram coming and going in its cage. This vision is complex when one considers the atrocities of the second world war.

Panic-stricken Georges sheds his rational modes of apprehension because he knows either consciously or unconsciously that they cannot protect him from a chance encounter with death. His body language reveal this. After continual exposure to suffering, fatigue and death the soldiers become indifferent to the fate of their fellow species. A natural instinct to survive clearly motivates. In the prison camp they have paced about like caged animals, Georges jumps out frightened like a crab when warned of a sniper, but the torture is in the mind. Then in fact they become objects which the parasites feed on in the camp, thus the imagery employed is rendered appropriate.

When one's situation is *desperate* one is likely more than ever to revert to *animal instincts*:

...ce wagon [...] sa destination première est bien de *transporter des animaux* [...] conformément à l'usage pour lequel il a été construit, *rempli de bestiaux, de sorte que nous serions devenus* sans doute en rendre compte quelque chose comme des *bêtes*...[RF:94]

It seems quite understandable that the men transported in cattle trucks should be reduced to thoughts about women, a natural instinct after all, especially when they themselves are placed in animal conditions and in fact reduced to animal actions, such as when Georges eats **grass** in the camp, like the horses and dogs eating mud at the beginning. Also when they are in the cattle truck they are like fish in a net, sweating, gasping for breath and all tangled in, crushed under limbs of others, like the sexual position so meticulously and frequently described in Simon's oeuvre.

The stereotypical women in *La Route des Flandres* are all products of the men's imaginations - they have little contact with reality and when Georges does his mind isn't entirely focused. They are indeed a projection of the erotic fantasies of men who have been imprisoned, hence their palpable and visual nature.

Corrine appears less as a particularized woman than as a concretization of a drive, which together with hunger and the inevitability of death locks man into a pattern of animal behaviour.

The *natural* and *biological* impulse is stressed:

gorillus sapiens [RF:176]

This motif is important as an underlying thematic. The animal side of nature is shown to exist

in symbiosis with the need for knowledge. Sexuality clearly exhibits the primitive, brutal aspect of human culture hidden under a veneer.

aucune , du moins relevant du langage articulé : quelque chose, plutôt, comme celui qu'emploient deux amants, ou ces gens qui connaissent le langage des bêtes[BP:143]

Language, even that particularly human trait, is brought to the level of animals. This is perhaps one of Simon's more telling images of the primal nature and primacy of the sexual act.

Animal imagery is used to show up the *background* against which the sexual act is represented, again stressing the animal side of the human nature:

l'oeil fou, le fou tordu [...] l'odeur ammoniacale des litières, et les bruits des bêtes[RF:49]

Stables becomes the background against which coitus takes place between Corrine and Iglésia. Corrine is also attributed features of horses, through indirect language. The furious and rushed love-making between the two is drawn upon through animal and instinctive language

grange [RF:261]

The nature of *woman's 'sexuality' and temperament* is reduced to animal levels:

geste brusque, imprévisible, avec cette foudroyante rapidité des *mouvements animaux*[RF:137]

Woman's Sex

'Woman' is protective and ethereal, but the prolific use of animal imagery contradicts this and herein lies the value of the feminine form, for the desirable woman's image would be insipid if it did not appeal to or reveal an animal aspect, which is more momentous and suggestive than the vegetal and liquid imagery. Also animal imagery is extended to describe a woman's sexual parts, reinforcing the bond between sexuality and nature. Simon employs language directly that is, thus showing that 'woman' as a sexual partner appeals to the animal instinct in man rather than his intellect. He affirms the erotic nature of the male-female encounter.

The general *animal nature of 'woman's sex'* is described:

...bouche herbue cette chose au nom de bête, de terme d'histoire naturelle - moule poulpe pulpe vulve - fait penser à ces organismes marins et carnivores aveugles, mais pourvus de lèvres, de cils : l'orifice de cette matrice ...[RF:39]

lèvres du fossé [RF:243]

moiteur fauve [RF:243]

du duvet de légères plumes d'oiseau [RF:259]

surface plane soyeuse couverte d'un *léger duvet* [BP:38]

toisons [HI:32]

boucs sombres [HI:270]

noir frisé sauvage [HI:299]

enserrant des îles pales sang des colombes [HI:342]

crépus bouche bête verticale [HI:340]

croupe [HI:126]

descendant le long de sa croupe [TR:195]

lèvres [TR:160]

duvet [TR:36]

tendant leurs croupes minces [HI:167]

A soldier sitting in the café is reminded of a song. The text has represented his fatigue and indicates how a cask with a bung-hole would act as an aphrodisiac as the soldier has no strength to imagine a girl.

croupe tendue est tournée vers les spectateurs [TR:160]

This refers to either the actress filmed or the copulating couple who are spied upon in the barn.

The *mysteriousness of 'woman's sex'* is described:

secret repli de chair [RF:13]

bouche cachée [RF:180]

profond des entrailles [RF:181]

humides et secrètes cachettes, la bouche d'ombre [RF:274]

The *snare-like and entrapping* quality of the *female sex* is described:

inoffensive et terrifiante immobilité de *piège* [HI:273]

The reality of sex suggests that there is neither master nor victim, but beings both slave and despot. Even if 'woman' emerges as more dependent on men and the weaker of the two, she reverses the situation and he becomes dependent on her. She is the object of desire still, but man disappears into her and is engulfed by the power of her sexuality.

Man's Sex

Man's sex too is described drawing upon images human and animal.

The *power of the phallus* is represented:

muscle [RF:181]

poussant comme étrangère parasite [RF:242]

The penis is *generally described*:

poisson [RF:274]

impétueuse laitance [RF:180]

Oral Sex

Actions of animals and humans are illustrated through imagery pertaining to animals to show *coitus* or *oral sex* and the notion of *intoxication* and *oblivion* inherent in the sexual act.

Language is drawn from a *nutritional* category to describe oral sex:

humant [RF:242]

respirant [RF:242]

léchant [RF:242]

rampant [RF:243]

lappant [RF:243]

lapper [RF:243]

m'enivrant [RF:243]

boufferais [RF:244]

bouffant [RF:244]

buvions [RF:245]

ramper [RF:273]

chèvre nourricière [RF:243]

petits singes sous le ventre de leur mère [RF:243]

ses seins multiples [RF:243]

petits animaux suspendus sous le ventre tétant [BP:75]

Sexual Position

Imagery is employed to show the *sexual position*:

une seule *bête apocalyptique* à plusieurs têtes plusieurs membres [RF:276]

...s'enflant (l'ombre) comme une montage, monstrueuse, s'élevant jusqu'au plafond et agitée de tempétueux soubresauts par cet houle furieuse que secoue au-dessous d'elle l'espèce de *bête qui possède deux têtes, quatre bas, quatre jambes et deux troncs soudés par le ventre au moyen de cet organe commun...* [RF:181]

bête à deux dos [BP:24]

...effets de lumière et d'ombre fondent des deux corps en une masse unique modelé dans une argile molle et grise, avivée de rose par endroits et luisante de sueur [...] On dirait quelque *animal invertébré* au corps lisse, pourvu de *membres multiples*, de protubérances, et où de cavités violettes bordées de dents s'ouvrent par places, comme pour *mordre*, laisser passer un *râle ou un cri*. Les chevelures raides sont rejetées en arrière comme des *crinières* par les *furieux mouvements* qui agitent le groupe... [LC:45]

HORSE

The *equestrian* motif becomes a catalyst to introduce sexuality and the sexual act, being an extremely prolific image. Four-legged animals relate to the more erotic images. The equestrian is motif *embryonic*:

...*Et alors il a voulu la monter...*>> Et sans transition il se mit à leur parler de la *pouliche*¹, l'*alezane*², avec les mêmes mots dont il s'était servi pour parler de la femme...[RF:134]

Definitions of Corrine as coral-like are related to this and this shows the ease with which women and horses are equated through language. The image of the desirable woman would be insipid and unprovocative if it did not also promise a mysterious animal aspect, more momentarily suggestive. The parallel made that one rides women as one rides horses prepares the way for constant equation between the two later, even if it may not be directly stated. It also here to an entire reflection based upon the equation that if de Reixach can ride his horse in the race, and win, then this will transfer to his sexual prowess over his jockey with Corrine. The two referents of horses and women are placed on the same level of meaning. Even though Iglésia makes love to Corrine she has no more reality to him than a celluloid film star, deprived of all reality save an imaginary one. To him she is not human but an object or animal, which explains the implicit connections of Corrine with mares, as well as the sensation of riding a horse being compared to coitus. It is difficult to demarcate the exact point of departure of these comparisons because of the dense proliferation of such a motif.

Equestrian imagery illustrates the *reproductive side of women* who are seen as breeders:

...Seulement pour voir si ce ne sont pas des *sabots* qu'il a à la places des pieds, seulement pour savoir de quelle race de *jument* était sa grand-mère...[RF:51]

Animal imagery is employed as a constant and conveys the animal and biological side of 'sexuality' and reproduction.

...l'ancêtre arabe qui avait dû *engrosser* une des arrière-arrière-grand-mères des barons de Reixach [...] de sorte qu'il était lui aussi, *comme ses chevaux, un croisement d'Arabe*...[HI:190]

Women are described generally through language used to describe horses:

...robes des *chevaux* et celles des femmes...[RF:18]

...cette *casaque en soie étincelante* [...] (de cette même matière brillante et satinée dont sont faits les dessous - soutien-gorge culotte et ces porte jarretelles noire - féminins)...[RF:45]

...cette *casaque rose* vif, tirant sur le mauve, qu'elle leur avait en quelque sorte imposée à tous les deux (Iglésia et de Reixach) comme une sorte de voluptueux et lascif symbole (comme les couleurs d'un ordre ou plutôt les insignes de fonctions pour ainsi dire séminales et turgescentes)...[RF:145]

The clothing of the women and the horses's silks are employed indiscriminately meaning that women are put on the same level as horses. Women are portrayed as spoils of war. Their colorful dresses are repeated in the silks worn by the jockeys. This calls forth knights in arms

jousting on horses in tournaments while wearing the colours of the women whose favours they so desired.

Also 'woman' and what she represents to man is indirectly considered in *La Route des Flandres* and several characteristics emerge which hold true across all the works, this being particularly that 'woman' is an object of desire. The above passage is extracted from the steeplechase passage whereby women are discussed initially as 'femmes' and then the narrator moves to a displaced 'elle' and then finally Corrine is cited as a particularized woman. The overall effect is to destroy any individuality on her part and creates an impersonal treatment.³ Additionally this highlights Georges' need to see as he describes this so visually even though he is not present and often it is indeed this he tries to anchor. His need to see causes him to return and retrace certain images in order to attempt to understand.

...noeud et la jointure ou la partie humaine finit avec la partie *cheval* est certainement admirable l'oeil distingue la délicatesse de la blanche carnation dans la femme de la netteté du *pelage éclatante* dans la *bette* d'un *bay clair* mais on confond ensuite en voulant déterminer les Confins...[RF:53]

This is taken from an engraving and enhances the vocabulary used to equate women and horses. Paintings and visual arts do later become at times quite indistinguishable from a live action as descriptions are either frozen or so much fabrication is used in describing paintings and sculpture that at times it is difficult to discern the difference. This is particularly so in the texts beginning with *La Bataille de Pharsale*.

hanches [RF:180]

joyeuse toute nue sous sa chevelure dénouée *crinière* toison que je pouvais sentir dans ma main crins à la fois soyeux et rêches[HI:113]

This recalls both the horse-woman motif and again the silks of the horses whilst coitus occurs.

s'il était capable de s'intéresser à autre chose qu'à des *jambes de chevaux* sauf bien sûr à celles des femmes[HI:189]

The narrator reflects as an adult upon the interests of his uncle, but these characters merge especially when it comes to mutual situations with women, particularly infidelity, when the anguish, guilt and pain becomes too much to bear.

t'aurais dû te marier avec l'*écuyère*[LC:61]

The crudeness of the soldiers again arises from their desperate situation. This situation is very basic and their language is reflective of this. The text has just spoken of the equestrian motif through the soldiers and then the text refers to the circus, in which the young builder was and women are equated again with horse riding. The tenuous situation is again accentuated as the ditches the soldiers build are like graves and reminiscent of the ditch and its associations in *La Route des Flandres*.

Equestrian imagery suggests the notion of women's *beauty being lost*:

...conservant tard (même mariées, même après le deuxième ou troisième enfant) cet air de jeune filles [...] (jusqu'à ce qu'elles se muent brusquement - vers le milieu de la trentaine - en quelque chose d'un peu hommasse, un peu chevalin (non pas, des *juments* : *des chevaux*... [RF:18]

Extracted from the frame of the steeplechase, this indicates that there are two types of woman, the 'sexual' and the 'non-sexual'. The latter assumes masculine traits of description. The sexual value of the feminine form seems to be bound in an absence of natural heaviness.

Horse imagery suggests the notion of *controlling and owning women*:

...de Reixach [...] a voulu lui aussi monter cette *alezane*, c'est-à-dire *la mater*, sans doute parce qu'à force de voir un vulgaire *jockey* la faire gagner il pensait que *la monter* c'était *la mater*, parce que sans doute pensait-il aussi qu'elle...(cette fois je parle de *l'alezane-femme*, la *blonde femelle* qu'il n'avait pu ou qu'il n'avait su, et qui n'avait d'yeux - et vraisemblablement autre chose aussi que les yeux - que pour ce...) Bref : peut-être a-t-il pensé qu'il ferait alors, si l'on peut dire, d'une pierre deux coups et que s'il *parvenait à monter l'une il materait l'autre aussi victorieusement...*[RF:173-174]

One can see the use of the equestrian motif to show the act of coitus and the notion of winning on horses is integrated fully into the text to imply also the victory over woman, indicating sexual prowess:

propriétaires de *chevaux*, de *femmes* [RF:143]

...ce qu'il avait à faire pour le moment c'était de la tenir là, et il devait en avoir plein les bras, je te le dis, parce que, cette *bête-là*, qu'est-ce qu'elle *pouvait tirer*, la *garce*...[RF:164]

One must recognize that language usually recognized as mutually dependent becomes bound through processes of associative networks and metaphor.

Corrine's and hence woman's *temperament* is described as that of a wild horse, making the correlation ever more dense and prolific:

...elle *trappant rageusement du pied par terre* [...] <<Si la *rafraichissais* un peu...[RF:136]

Corrine's personality is described to be like that of a horse's temperament and this is extended to incorporate her *sexual nature*:

...lui qui aurait pu être son père [...] de lui expliquer qu'un *cheval* n'était pas exactement une décapotable sport ou un domestique et ne se conduisait (ni n'obéissait) pas tout à fait de la même façon; mais cela ne dura pas (sans doute, dit Iglésia, parce que c'avait *n'a jamais plu à un animal de monter sur le dos d'un autre animal, ni non plus à un animal de sentir un autre animal sur son dos, sauf dans les cirques*, car après qu'il eut vidée une ou deux fois, elle n'insista pas) [...] si elle réapparut par la suite dans ces *culottes de cheval* et ces bottes que valaient aussi cher que le cheval sur lequel elles étaient censées lui permettre de *monter*, ce fut sans doute pour le seul plaisir de s'exhiber dedans...[RF:130-131]

This is exemplary of the way animal imagery comes to describe coitus and also Corrine's personality. The stress is on her flightiness and additionally her awareness of her sexuality and desirability which she flaunts.

...Iglésia pensant, disant plus tard : <<Mais alors bon sang il avait qu'à me la laisser *monter*. Si c'était pour faire démonstration, mince! Qu'est-ce qu'il espérait? Qu'après ça elle ne coucherait plus qu'avec lui, qu'elle allait se priver de se faire *enfiler* par le premier venu simplement parce qu'elle l'aurait vu *sur son dos*? Mais si ç'avait pas été moi, ça aurait été pareil. Parce qu'elle était *en chaleur*. Et avec ce temps lourd qui n'arrangeait rien. Alors avant même de prendre le départ elle était déjà toute *trempée*!...[RF:145]

voix (féminines ou d'hommes) [...] discutant de *saillies (bêtes ou humains)*,[RF:19]

The *horse-woman* motif extends to the representation of the sexual position and the present participle '*chevauchant*'⁴ becomes definitively linked with 'sexuality':

haut perchés, *simiesques*, sur les *bêtes* gracies et élégantes, leurs *casques* multicolores se suivant[RF:21]

accroupi sur cette *alezane dorée* [...] aux *hanches opulentes* [...] longue *queue blonde* se balançant [RF:22-23]

.chevauché, sailli sa femme ni plus ni moins qu'une *jument*[RF:266]

Such language is used constantly and is applicable to all situations, as here the reference is to the ancestral de Reixach and his wife but is also used with Iglésia and de Reixach and is subject to general use.

écartait les cuisees *chevauchait*⁵, tous deux *chevauchant* (ou plutôt que avaient été *chevauchés* par[RF:279]

The coital act is similarly treated in its positioning for men and women.

comme s'il *chevauchait une invisible monture* [BP:212]

In *La Bataille de Pharsale* the entrance to the 'sexual' is inevitably along the lines of the equestrian motif.

pas un homme mais une sorte de créature hybride aussi *moitié étalon moitié homme* [HI:342]

This describes Iglésia who has just been referred to as having ridden and been ridden by

Corrine. The combinations take on more than a one dimensional meaning and layers of meaning combine and are attracted to one another.

cerisiers les feuillages [...] elle à *cheval* sur une branche le haut du corps invisible[HI:154]

(Refer to 'coral'.)

...ragots sur elle et ce jockey [...] pensant pourquoi pas après tout quand on a commencé par un garçon coiffeur violoniste charmeur comme disait Paulo passant en somme d'un deuxième violon à une première *monte* [...] Se faire baiser or plutôt cette fois *se faire monter*...[HI:341]

Corrine is treated sexually at a very young age. She is an object of desire and this is marked by the way she straddles the tree and this is established through associative networks with horse imagery as its base. Also the association with cherry trees marks this. She is shown to be promiscuous and also again the notion of being ridden is used equally for men and women, although in both cases stated by men. Thematic links are forged reflecting back to the notion of horse-riding and women as a sexual object of this motif.

homme maintenant à *cheval* sur la poitrine de la fille [...] petit doigt disparaissant dans les *crins noirs*[TR:86]

...jambes sont à demi fléchies et légèrement écartées comme celles d'un *jockey*. Son bassin avance et recule en même temps qu'il est *animé* d'un mouvement de bas en haut, à la façon d'un *cavalier* se laissant aller souplement sur sa selle pour accompagner la *houle d'un cheval au galop*. Les fesses phosphorescentes *montent et descendent au même rythme*... [LC:155]

Leçon de Choses is not so replete with the equestrian motif, but in one short sentence all the images of *La Route des Flandres* are basically touched on. Combined are the horse-woman motif, the equestrian and the coital position.

The *steeplechase* provides a *binding background* for the *horse-woman-war motif*:

par l'espèce de long *soupir* s'exhalant de la *foule* délivrée, pâmée et vorace (non pas proprement parler un orgasme, mais [...] pré-orgasme[RF:158])

The crowd's reaction to the horses and the sound they emit is equated with the sexual act and extends the association of the equestrian motif and sexuality.

Battle is used strongly in conjunction with horses and the *woman-horse-battle* combination figures as a pertinent motif. La Bataille de Pharsale is replete with such images because of its verbal, written and visual descriptions of battles:

À Cheval[BP:121]

galopant sur le sol les près sentant la houle de muscles entre. [BP:81]

This is taken from the context where images are drawn from the battle and the concomitant equestrian motif and also from a sexual framework.

Buste de *guerrière carolingienne* sa longue chevelure s'échappant en cascade de sous la *couronne crinière de cavale sauvage* [HI:258]

Taken from a description of a stamp, this equates the horse-woman motif with the battle motif and with the mythic imagery of the warrior an archetypal and eternal status is given over to the image.

The equestrian motif extends to describe a *woman's sexual parts*, even if *abstrusely*:

...Devinette : qu'est-ce que est fendu, ovale, humide et entouré de poils? [...] l'un regardant l'autre. Jaillissant dru dans un chuintement liquide, comme un *cheval*. Ou plutôt *jument*....[BP:10]

This also equates woman's sexual parts with urination.

Transmutation

The *horse* is central to the image of *transmutation* which is strongly bound up in 'sexuality'. The dead horse the defeated soldiers pass combines the themes of death, destruction, transmutation, war and the steeplechase. The horse, living, trotting racing or dead precipitates images of time and 'sexuality'. (Refer to the abstract and vegetal categories under transmutation) The image of the horse in the ditch combines with images of 'woman', womb, death and life, hair, **grass**, and the mystery of life and death:

il pouvait toujours l'entendre haleter faiblement, à moins qu'il ne fût maintenant aussi mort que le *cheval* et déjà à demi englouti, repris par la terre [RF:229]

The image of the horse decomposed and mingling with the mud creates a picture of simple reduction back into the earth and combines with the image presented on the first page of *La Route des Flandres* of the dogs eating mud. This is by association placed next to the horse, which eats grass and which Georges imagines himself to do. Additionally there is a parallel between the entry into the earth and into a woman. These combine the notion of transmutation and 'sexuality'.

Human sexuality is transient as opposed to the natural and organic world. Man is captive in duration, and tries in vain to escape this through erotic transcendence. He is ravaged by the same specters of death and decay as animals. Simon's conception of human history is cyclical, with each generation reliving the experiences of the others. Human fate mirrors natural history. In *La Bataille de Pharsale* lovers are reduced to a frieze which slowly crumbles under the force of wind, rain and time. By using similar terms to describe the decay of human and animal life Simon again reduces man to the condition of animals.

Mortality is seen in physiological terms and comparisons with animals stress. For man and all animals death means decay. Georges when reflecting on death considers disintegration, not the spiritual or religious side. The perennial theme of time is no longer embodied in the vegetation of *L'Herbe* but as a conscious animate phenomena and close to one's 'sexuality' and mortality in a different way.

DOG

The *dog* imagery mainly deals with the *mouth or tongue* as a focus of erotic desire. Georges mentions his need to lick the farmwoman and his pavlovian reflex of salivation while imagining Corrine's naked body. Later the analogy is completed in his mind as he and Corrine are transformed into mad galloping dogs during their physical encounter. This has caused him to compare her sex to a dog's tongue. Pounding on the door *La Bataille de Pharsale* the narrator imagines the woman he loves is in bed with another man and visualizes them as frightened dogs,

immobilized by his presence. For both Georges and O. the use of dog imagery suggests a rejection of sexual sublimation and a promotion of instinctual reality between man and woman.

The initial frame arises from the central scene of the *ditch and bed* where Georges feels he has turned into an animal:

galopant à quatre pattes [RF:275]

j'étais un chien [RF:275]

un chien la langue pendante galopant haletant [RF:275]

rose mouillé comme la langue d'un petit chien frétilant jappant de plaisir [RF:275]

Here Georges compares Corrine's vagina to a dog's tongue.

toujours à quatre pattes [BP:75]

This is reminiscent of *La Route des Flandres* where the narrator in battle finds himself close to the ground. If one looks closely at this passage one will note a strong emphasis on vegetation.

Also this metaphor deserves special attention in relation to the war theme and the *mud* the dogs eat at the beginning of *La Route des Flandres* in the dark gloom. In the Prisoner of War camp Georges escapes on all fours and ends up eating dirt just as he has imagined himself as a horse eating **grass**. The decaying horse is caked with mud in its death bed. The dog's mouths are pink rimmed recalling descriptions of female genitalia. This imagery is sexual, too for a truck hanging its belly on the ground is referred to as 'chienne pleine.'⁶

The image of dogs and mud is sexually and existentially metaphorical and partakes of the same constellation of images depicting Georges as starved of sex. *Triptyque* confirms this image of the dog as an image of 'sexuality' and death as the old woman's who kills the rabbit is described as dog-faced.

à quatre pattes [TR:61]

à quatre pattes [TR:189]

Similar descriptions emerge in *Triptyque* to illustrate the couples attempt to rise to their feet after coitus in an almost intoxicated state.

Dog imagery shows '*sexuality*' as a *primal need and a reflex*:

qu'elle fait penser (mais pas penser, pas plus que le *chien* ne pense quand il entend la sonnette fatidique qui *déclenche ses réflexes* : donc pas penser [RF:46]

A telling image this describes the supremely sexual 'woman' - Corrine - at the steeplechase with whom the Georges does later have an affair. At this point he has not seen Corrine except for a very brief encounter. An emphasis is placed on the need to see which is extended through discussions in the Prisoner of War camp. This image underlines the strength of the 'gorillus' in man over the 'sapient.'

Man's need for sexual fulfillment is as desperate as that of a *hungry dog*:

son *air de chien maigre* [...] D'avoir *envie de mordre*[RF:223]

...telle donc qu'ils (c'est-à-dire lui, Blum - ou plutôt *imagination*, ou plutôt leur *corps*, c'est-à-dire leur *peau*, leur *organes*, leur *chair adolescents sevrés de femmes*) l'avaient matérialisée...[RF:221]

The moribund situation stresses why the men fabricate and the primal nature of the relationship between men and women.

tirant la langue comme un petit chien qu'elle aurait tenu en laisse [HE:193]

...elle ne te montrait pas ses seins peut-être [...] toujours soigneusement penchée en avant [...] mais je suppose qu'elle en avait l'habitude, une de ses postures favorites sans doute, comme ça et couchée sur le dos, et toi n'est-ce pas tu ne les regardais pas, c'était sans doute ça que tu étais *rouge comme une tomate* [...] seulement à vous voir on aurait dit exactement *deux chiens en chaleur*...[HE:194]

Sabine is obsessed with Pierre's infidelities, real or imagined, and she here is testimony to men and women employing the same language. She projects a view of woman using sexual powers and this being a natural situation.

Dogs illustrate the *coital position* particularly that of *coitus interruptus*:

chiens collés [BP:275]

GOAT/DOG

Goats and dogs emerge to represent *bestiality* and this indicates that the urge is so strong that men do not discern in their partners and moreover it indicates the animalism in man. This sense of indiscriminate sexual and bestial commerce also prepares the vocabulary of lovemaking scenes between Corrine and Georges:

...gens de la campagne [...] leurs soeurs et les *chèvres* hein? Paraît qu'à défaut de soeur ils font ça avec les *chevres* [...] Peut-être qu'ils n'y voient pas de différence entre sa femme et son *chien* [...] peut-être que c'est un *chien* changé en femme [...] alors il a transformé sa *chèvre* en fille ou sa soeur en *chèvre* [...] ce boiteux épousa la *chèvre-pied* et ce *bouc de frère* venait *la saillir* dans sa maison [...] c'était du *lait de chèvre* [...] celle qui se cache derrière ce *paon mythologique* [...] la *chèvre* que *s'accouplait avec son bouc de frère*...il (ce Vulcain) les a sans doute surpris et *capturés tous les deux dans un filet* [...] elle était *pleine* [...] comme une *vache*...[RF:120-122]

Drawn into this image that of the peacock-woman which connects bestiality and desire. Coitus interruptus is alluded to through being caught in a net like fish - a strangling experience. Women are not differentiated from animals and language emerges naturally to combine in an overall effect of non-selectiveness in the sexual urge. This derives from a conversation in the Prisoner of War camp where the men are equally deprived of women and are trying to understand the situation of the farm-girl.

Dog imagery represents *old women as non-sexual*:

profil et barbiche de bouc [RF:252]

bouc grisâtre [RF:252]

mâchonner [RF:252]

ruminer [RF:252]

Conversely dog imagery is used to describe as *woman as desirable*:

mamelles d'une chèvre [TR:75]

A young boy is gazing at an image of a woman in a magazine and it induces him to masturbate. The look of the 'other' is very strong in this text. There are young boys who watch a young girl undress, who watch a couple copulating in the barn and who watch coitus at the movies and this all has the sense of a transgression. When we see the woman in the film under the director's eye/camera the innocence is removed and becomes a more 'projected' look. Throughout the women in this text are desirable objects and objects of the male gaze. There are many autoerotic objects within the texts.

ASS

In *La Route des Flandres*, *La Bataille de Pharsale* and *Histoire* the narrators relate dog or horse images to an erotic episode from Apuleius' classic, *The Golden Ass*. In every instance the narrators relate it to a specific incident in which the protagonist Lucius was transformed into an ass and became intimate with a married woman who had fallen in love with him. As an exemplary sexual partner Corrine helps Georges move closer to an ideal synthesis of man and beast which for him is embodied in the figure of the golden ass, which symbolizes the acme of erotic pleasure. Lucius, like O. in *La Bataille de Pharsale* is reticent to penetrate a woman who so desires him. Yet as the passage progresses it emerges that it is the woman who is unharnessing an extremely stronger sexual drive.

At climax the ass wonders if he can ever satisfy the woman. The fact that his partner is older underscores the significant role of woman as an experienced guide to erotic pleasure and establishes woman as verging on the nymphomaniac, not the bird-like creature described elsewhere.

Aside from the obvious bestiality, this contributes to a feeling of transgression for woman in this classic legitimately belongs to her husband. Yet the scabrous situation also heightens the appeal.

Arising from the central situation of the bed and ditch Georges also imagines himself as the *Ass of Apuleius*:

j'étais cet âne de la légende grecque [RF:275]

The *phallus* is then described in terms of this *transition*:

raidi comme un âne [RF:275]

idole d'or [RF:275]

membre d'âne [RF:275]

l'âne d'Apulée [RF:275]

cuisses écartées exhibant au premier plan un [BP:159]

membre d'ane dressé [BP:159]

A bordello film is described again referring to the matron and her ass-lover.

*comment avec si grosses et si longues pattes pourrais-je chevaucher un corps si délicat
comment avec mes durs sabots éteindre* [BP:93]

l'âne d'Apulée copuler [HI:342]

Such imagery illustrates the *eternal aspect* of the sexual quest by *employing archetypal figures*:

...mère de Minotaure et son mugissant amant...[BP:93]

The latin classic is read by the narrator as a child and arouses him sexually and aids in stimulating the child-narrator's fascinations with erotic texts. The latin text is employed to create a framework of battle and eternity. In *Histoire* the narrator's sexual memories are evoked as he searches the dictionary to translate difficult words and some powerfully erotic work is produced. Foreign postcards and spanish words have had the same effect.

FISH

Most pervasive of the system of proliferation and internal generation and association is perhaps the *hole/circle* conjunction with its various configurations through the novel of which the *fish and hole* conjunction is the most sexual. This is most explicit in *Triptyque* and indeed is the most representative of the texts to show in detail how these associations are made. Its importance is derived from all the possible systems which belong to it.⁷

In *Triptyque* there is a sequence of a couple making love in a darkened barn and then two boys fishing in a nearby river which interweave in the narration. The development of each sequence is structured according to the narration and according to the principle of the signifier and the signified. The barn/river sequence shows that the association is not merely metaphoric, but also based on the resemblance of movement and stasis and the appearance and disappearance of the *trout*. The vision becomes less obscure as the boys look through the slit and when they are looking into the water it becomes more obscure until it reaches total darkness. The *trout* swims

into the old jug lying on the river bed which is characterized by a black *hole* whereas the penis comes out of a *black hole or the pubis*. The base of the phallus disappears and subsequently moves in and out and the fish remains motionless. Thus the diverse objects are related through similar objects and contiguity and eventually each comes to reflect the other. The banal recovers its value as a usable and a reusable part of innumerable possible structures.⁸

The whole language of the *fish* is eroticized and becomes a symbol of the phallus. Woman's sex is fish-like and it smells and tastes of the salty sea. The *fish* imagery is very sensual and sexually stimulating in the narrator's mind and the slippery movement of the fish evokes sweating bodies and ejaculated sperm.

The *fish and penis* are described as floundering outside of water and the vagina respectively:

apoplectique hors de l'eau [RF:274]

Penetration of the woman represents a descent into the other world of the liquid womb/cave.

The *penis and fish* become correlatives of each other through sensory and visual association:

membre luisant[TR:16]

[gland] rouge et luisant[TR:66]

luisant comme deux ventres de poissons, le membre de l'homme [...] étrangement blanc aussi[TR:61]

...L'extrémité tachée d'huile de son pouce est d'un *rose saumoné* [...] [corps de la *sardine*] chair d'un *rose saumon pâle* sous la fine peau...[LC:79]

The thumb and food are equated by the imagery here and also there is reference earlier to the woman described here from a sensual position as having cut her finger as she hurries secretly to meet her lover. This can also be associated then with other imagery of the *penis* as a *fish*. This is a discrete allusion to fellatio.

The *fish* becomes a symbol and religion is tainted with sexual overtones because of the *phallic/fish* associations made implicit elsewhere:

...colonnes entre les fenêtres entièrement peintes damier mauve et ocre avec alternativement un *poisson* et une *colombe* dans chacun des losanges ocres et le signe cabalistique toujours le même de lettres entrecroisées dans chaque losange...[HI:42]

The image of the *fish* is used sexually elsewhere and becomes a sign here. This is taken from the chapel at school, where Lambert is continually placed as being crude and smutty, colouring religious rhetoric with sexual overtones. Also Corrine expresses anger at being but a symbol and Georges remembers this and sees her as a hieroglyph to be deciphered on a wall, intertextually linking this with the drawing on the phone booth and then later the fish on the walls of the catacombs. This accentuates the link between reading and sex since the fish is the sign of Christ and is part of the woman-as-text motif.

The *tenuousness* of the men's situation in the cattle-truck is like that of *fish caught in a net* and this is reminiscent of the *sexual position*:

...nous étions couchés dans le noir imbriques entassés au point de ne pas bouger un bras ou une jambe sans rencontrer ou plutôt sans demander la permission à un autre bras ou une autre jambe, *étouffant*, la sueur ruisselant sur nous poumons *cherchant l'air comme des poissons sur le sec* [...] la suffocante odeur de déjections et sueur...[RF:19]

The men are prisoners being taken in a cattle truck to a prisoner of war camp. This evokes the absurd animal denigration of the prisoners and is also recalled later when bodies in the sexual act are described, again stressing the close proximity of life and death.

Additionally the hole the fish disappears into could be seen inter-textually as part of the hole, ditch and grave cluster into which man eventually disappears making another connection between death and sexuality and this can be seen in the river-hollow the girl drowns in *Triptyque*.

The equation between *fish* and *coitus* is implicit:

...Quand ils passent près d'elle elle sent leur *forte odeur* mêlée à celle de la marée. Une *forte odeur* à la fois *de coquillage* et *d'humus* monte de l'épaisse toison noire sous les fesses polies où le membre va et vient [LC:154-155]

This calls up the hole motif and again places the *vegetal* motif in juxtaposition with the sexual motif.

...truite file sur la droite d'un *rapide coup de queue* et se se glisse dans l'ouverture du broc couché sur le flanc. Avant qu'elle *disparaisse* les garçons ont pu voir *briller son ventre clair*. Lorsque le bassin de l'homme recule on entrevoit pendant une fraction de seconde son *membre luisant et cylindrique* sortant à demi de l'épaisse toison noire entre les cuisses repliées, presque *bleues, comme du lait*, et *phosphorescentes* dans la pénombre jaunâtre de la grange. L'un des garçons chuchote à l'autre de ne pas *bouger* et qu'elle va *bientôt ressortir*... [TR:15]

The member is correlative with the *trout* and their actions echo one another. The boys are watching both actions and it becomes difficult to discern at times which is which. Also sperm is previously referred to as milt, reflecting fish imagery again. Note the use of the *vegetal* motif and the use of '*pendant*' which connects with the rabbit imagery.

truite file comme une flèche et disparaît en amont dans la zone qu'occulte le reflet aveuglant du ciel [TR:18]

The *penis*, *trout* and *arrow* are correlated which establishes an associative network of *sex* and *war* and of course a blinding aspect is evoked which illustrates the idea of the blind eye of the penis searching but never succeeding as if a Blinded Orion. This is reflective of the search for knowledge but there is ultimate failure on that and the sexual level.

[de poissons aux reflets métalliques] se tordent spasmodiquement [LC:143]

The text has just moved from description of the sexual act and the walkers pass fishermen evoking the sexual act through the *fish*.

LOBSTER

Such imagery indicates *old age* and the '*non-sexual*':

...crustacés, de sombres homards bleu-noir vidés de leurs intérieurs et dont subsistaient seules les carapaces [...] imperceptible inclinaison qui distingue une carcasse morte ou un mur en ruines d'un organisme (chair ou pierre) vivant ...[HI:87]

SNAKE

This arises from the *ditch* and *bed* association:

bras serpent [RF:275]

The *phallus* and *snake* images are correlated:

...gland congestionné, gonflé comme une prune, *glisse* entre les replis doux et chauds...[LC:142]

The snake indirectly becomes a correlative of the penis by virtue of the movement attributed it.

A parallel is made between, *snake, hair, battle and sex*:

De chaque côté du front elle est pourvue de deux courtes *ailes* sortant des mèches de *cheveux* dans lesquelles s'entremêlent des *serpents*[BP:135]

This is extracted from a description of an image on a banknote that the narrator examines of Medusa and additionally it has an image on it of a warrior hurling a javelin. With the phonetic sounding equivalent of '*chevaux*' and '*cheveaux*' there is a movement drawing into itself all these images and combining them into a cluster. The symbiosis between life and death is again established.

Snake imagery is often rather abstruse:

dessinant sur le pellicule les *langue floues et serpentines* tache claire de forme convulsive superposée au ventre et à la poitrine[HI:300]

The above is taken from the artist's studio where the flames from the stove superimpose this image on the naked body of the model which emerges on film and may be construed as having implicit sexual overtones in view of imagery of the established in other areas.

DRAGON

The *dragon* has phallic suggestions:

...corps écailleux du dragon d'ivoire, les chrysanthèmes d'ivoire, la gueule aux babines retroussées, les dents crochues, la langue apparaissent et disparaissent tout à tout entre les doigts de porcelaine teintés de rose...[LC:143-144]

The woman stroller is toying with the base of an umbrella shaped like a dragon's body. The background is obviously very sensual and intensified through such imagery. This is part of the hole motif.

RABBIT

Through association rabbit imagery becomes bound up with the *fish* and *hole motif*, *submission* and abstrusely the *ditch* in which Georges *hides* from the enemy. Above all it illustrates the sexual act and its subsequent experiences for man. (Refer to submission and rabbit sections of the abstract category.):

...pend un lapin [...] tantôt parfaitement immobile, tantôt agité soubresauts et de coups de reins impuissants. Sortant de l'autre main aux doigts noueux et jaunes on peut voir par par instant brille la lame de couteau. La fille couchée dans le foin accompagne de coups de reins le va-et-

vient rythme des fesses de l'homme dont on voit chaque fois briller le membre luisant et disparaît ensuite jusqu'aux couilles entre les poils touffues, noirs et brillants, bouclés d'astrakan ... [TR:25]

The *hole motif* arises from the movement of the penis reflecting back to the *trout*. The *knife* which kills the *rabbit* is equated with the *penis* through the word '*briller*' thus *knife*, *death*, *sex* and *rabbit* are instantly correlated. The movements of the *rabbit* reflect that of coitus between the couple in the barn. The man's member through the similar vocabulary of '*briller*' is correlated with the knife becoming a weapon which in this text is further heightened by the notion of the *rabbit* struggling, then submitting and then becoming motionless under the knife. This action reflects that of the woman in the barn. Note the use of the barn stressing the animal background to coitus, the *hay* as a background and 'woman's' sex being treated in *vegetal* terms.

...jambe se balance au rythme des poussées de l'homme. Le corps du lapin oscille au rythme de la marche de la vieille femme qui se dirige d'un pas saccadé vers l'un des pruniers... [TR:26]

It is ambiguous whether this is the couple in the barn or bar-girl and groom on his wedding night but they are all associated through the basic generator of the *rabbit*.

jette alors dans l'herbe le couteau ensanglanté [TR:38]

The old woman has killed the *rabbit* with the knife, thus have blood and knife equated with the rabbit which carries through to the more sexual images of the penis, as a weapon covered in blood in deflowering and equates life and death in the sexual act, discussed in the category.

corps écartelé, trop rose par endroits, plus que nu lui aussi, comme le corps d'un animal écorché [RF:51-52]

The woman in the hotel is paralleled with the *rabbit*. The *skinned rabbit* is not very different from the naked woman on the hotel bed especially when half covered by a cloth. The skinned animal and naked body could also be seen as a parallel for the removal of inhibitions in the sexual act. Additionally there is a description of rabbits in their hutch which breaks into a

representation of the sexual act, that is the jerking followed by a motionless and this closeness correlates the activities of the copulating lovers.

Olfactory images are also combined with the visual for the smell of the mushrooms surrounds the dead rabbit with the odor of nature in the deep woods and combines to culminate in the scent of decay. The mushroom is part of the network of phallic associations. The red of the rabbit's and boar's blood which stains the face of the battered bridegroom at the end reinforces these associations.

WOMB/TOMB

The following extraction illustrates the notion of the *ditch/womb* which Georges takes refuge in. It is both a refuge but additionally a symbol of the earth assimilating everything. Because of its physical make-up it is reminiscent of the vulva and thus the womb. In his desperate situation Georges longs to return to the safety and warmth of the womb:

...son corps tout entier aplati, comme s'il s'efforçait de disparaître entre les lèvres du fossé, se fondre, se glisser, se faufiler tout entier cette étroite fissure pour réintégrer la paisible matière (matrice) originelle...[RF:230]

This illustrates the disparity of situation and the need for protection which is sought in the *ditch/womb* and again the life/death equation emerges. Each occasion where the narrator longs to return to the womb indicates the narrator's disillusionment and show that pressure is upon them. It seems natural that when one is close to death one should think of one's mother who naturally brings one into the world. The lips of the vagina emerge as equivalent to lips of the earth or ditch which takes and produces life. The connection between the two poles of creation and destruction is embodied in 'sexuality' and 'woman'.

The *barn* becomes a *refuge* and is perceived as the *womb*:

...puis ils furent dans la *grange* avec cette fille tenant la lampe [...] semblable à une apparition quelque chose comme une de ces vieilles peintures au jus de pipe : brun (ou plutôt bitumeux) et *tiède* [...] comme s'ils avaient pénétré (pénétrant en même temps dans l'*odeur âcre des bêtes du foin*) dans une *sorte d'espace organique, viscéral*...[RF:36]

The safety of the barn is associated with re-entry into the womb and with intercourse. Note the deployment of painting which becomes more frequent in the later texts but also has a function in its phallic capacity.

The *Womb* becomes representative of *one's origins*:

...sein qui déjà peut-être me portait dans son *ténébreux tabernacle*, sorte de *têtard gélatineux lové sur lui-même avec ces deux énormes yeux sa tête de ver à soie sa bouche sans dents son front cartilagineux d'insecte, moi?*...[HI:402]

The narrator longs to return to the womb with his entire life ahead of him and the notion of the tabernacle evokes safety and shelter. 'Woman' becomes figuratively a shelter through and in her body for man.

...[voyageur] lui-même dans cette position passive, foetal en quelques sorte, qu'il a d'instinct retrouvée dans son difficile sommeil : le corps affaissée, douloureusement recroquevillé dans le coin de la banquette comme par une nostalgie du sein maternel, de protection, de non agir -, d'autant plus, donc, que tout concourt à renforcer cette paisible et illusoire sensation d'immobilité ou plutôt d'immuabilité cherchée dans le ventre de sommeil, de sorte qu' [...] il comprend tout à coup avec une sorte d'aigre déchirement , d'impuissant et fulgurant désespoir [...] que ce n'est pas tant le train qui pendant la nuit faussement protectrice l'a emporté d'un

endroit à un autre, et qu'il s'est moins rapproché de nouveau rivages et de nouveaux horizons que de sa propre destruction... [HE:111-112]

The evocation of the womb is nostalgic and furthermore associated with death. There are many configurations of time, death and birth. In *L'Herbe* the female is transposed into a male and death into birth. With the traveller described here the theme of the womb involves a double take of time. It stresses the stasis of the womb and yet also by associating the womb with death it involves the cyclical notion of time. This is seen in larger scale with the quote extracted here from *Histoire* above. Both oppose time's linear quality which imposes an artificially directional order on reality and embodies progress. Linear time is man-made yet man does not direct time. This also represents the stasis of time in orgasm.

BIRD

By no means could one say that the representation of women is simplistic if we look at the imagery over the entire study and the bird imagery definitively negates such a statement.

Bird imagery illustrates the *sensuality and 'sexuality' of woman*:

...un de ces magazines où les femmes en papier glacé ont l'air *d'espèces d'oiseau, de longilignes échassiers*, non pas parées mais simplement détruites en tant que femmes, conversion ou réductions par l'homme à un simple métrage de soie : une anguleuse silhouette découpée, hérissée d'ongles, de talons, de gestes aigues, pourvue au reste de cet *estomac précieusement d'échassier, d'autruche*, qui lui permet non seulement de digérer mais de faire siennes les misogyniques et haineuses inventions d'un modéliste, mais encore de les reconvertir, en quelque sorte, en sens inverse : non plus sophistiquée, plate et glacée, mais cette assimilation de la

soie, du cuir, des bijoux, à la tendre et *duveteuse* chair, de sorte que le cuir, la froide soie, les durs bijoux semblent devenir eux-mêmes quelque chose de tiède, de tendre, de vivant...[RF:130]

Additionally birds indicate 'woman's' *delicate and weaker sex*:

sa petite *poulette* ou plutôt sa petite *pigeonne* adorée [RF188]

...sa poitrine, ses seins *s'élevant et s'abaissant comme ces gorges d'oiseaux* [...] si bien que lorsqu'il la toucha [...] sensation de ne pas la toucher vraiment, comme lorsqu'on **prend un oiseau** dans la main...[RF:224]

Bird imagery indicates *woman's' seductive nature*:

cette *pigeonne* de vingt ans en train de *recouler* et de *se frotter* contre lui[RF:188]

pigeonne [RF:294]

This is an ambiguous referral point and could be Corrine or the ancestor's wife. As such it merging these characters assigning them similar traits. Also the farm-girl is drawn into this as she is referred to by the imagery of the peacock and this then transfers to Corrine so that the complex and continual weaving of language which is constantly expansive and qualifying can be seen.

`*Woman's*' *mysterious personality and 'sexuality'* is represented:

Est-ce qu'on peut jamais savoir avec les gonzesses [RF:170]

Within the background of the steeplechase Iglésia is unable to work out why Corrine is crying. This is extends to all women in light of the generality established. All her motivations are presented as an enigma to man but one could well say this of all people with the stress on solipsism. Women emerge constantly as the mysterious 'other' through their persons but ultimately through their 'sexuality'.

`Sexuality' in its mystery is akin to *death and its mystery*:

comme si la mort avait quelque chose d'indécent, exigeait, même que la fornication, le secret [HE:165]

Man is represented as a *bird of prey* at war and additionally when riding a horse in battle. *Women are thus objects in sex to be won*:

son profil [...] d'*oiseau de proie*[RF:22]

tirer les moineaux à coups de grosse bête [LC:61]

The crudeness of the soldiers emerge because of their tenuous situation. This is represented quite realistically as to how soldiers very probably speak. Also their conversations are left unpunctuated adding to the realism and there are constant qualifications just in the discussions of the men in *La Route des Flandres*.

Birds imprinted on *clothing* indicate *sexuality* or *it's absence in women*:

elle [Sabine] donc, debout parmi la neige de fleurs printanières, l'éternel et silencieux *gazouillis des oiseaux exotiques*[HE:170]

Sabine is patterned with the antithesis of what she represents.

The *old* and *undesirable* women are portrayed as rather *indelicate* and *unattractive birds*:

...nez (ou plutôt de *becs*)[...] paupières bleuies ou plutôt noircies non par les fads mais par l'âge, semblables à ces membranes plissées glissant sur les pupilles immobiles des *reptiles* leur sombres et luisantes toques de *plumes* traversées par ces longues *aiguilles aux pointes aigües*

déchirantes, *comme les becs, les serres des aigles héraldiques [...] cous ridés*, ces rigides titres de noblesse, qui dans mon esprit d'enfant, semblaient inséparables des vieilles chairs jaunies...[HI:11]

Also the image of the *reptile* is used to describe aging. The narrator as a youth was horrified by this image of women. Yellow is quite often employed with images of death and decay and aging.

mêmes paupières fripées de *tortues*[HI:51]

Wrinkled animals are used to describe the old women in the text.

...elles omniprésentes et omnipotentes, toujours immobiles, invisibles, avec leurs bijoux noirs, leur violettes noires, rigides dans leurs atours sombre, avec ces *plumes, ces élytres, ces serres*, cette morphologie, ces organes postiches de *créatures vaguement fabuleuses et nécrophages*, cachées dans l'épaisseur de la nuit...[HI:51]

The notion of something frightening emerges with the old and unattractive which haunted the youth of the narrator. The use of black is often associated with the old.

mains jaunes et osseuses semblables à des *pattes de poulet* [TR:47]

main semblable à une de ces *pattes de poulet, jaune et ridée* [HE:23]

...main *décharnée et jaune* - la *patte de poulet* [...] [mort] prenait possession de ce corps, [effet] la dessexuer [...] [garde] asexuée elle aussi, en sens qu'elle semblait appartenir à une de ces *créatures imaginaires*, ni homme ni femme, *quelque Cyclope enroué* ...[HE:113]

Birds come to represent the *sexual position*:

créatures mythiques pourvues des *plumes d'aigrettes environnés de battements d'ailes*[BP:25]

The use of bird imagery represents *lovers surprised*:

...pigeon s'envole. Son corps aux ailes déployés passe devant une fenêtre [...] fenêtre est entrouvert [...] O. voit le corps penché au-dessus d'ell, comme planant sur l'air [...] les deux bras écartés à demi repliés et écartées comme s'il chevauchait une invisible monture...[BP:211-212]

At the very beginning of *La Bataille de Pharsale* one is given a representation of a *pigeon flying* like an *arrow* from a crossbow through the play on yellow and black which associates the battle and sexual motif. *La Bataille de Pharsale* is to be noted for scenes which are virtually repeated word for word, of which this is included and repeated with very slight variations on pages 169-170. Images of Cupid from the latin 'desire' and pigeons with wings combine with arrows to represent 'sexuality'. This emerges as timeless.

PEACOCK

The *peacock* becomes symbolic of the farm-girl's half glimpsed beauty. It is primarily associated with the curtain and the fascination of men with the mysteriousness of women and the enigma she presents - her flighty intangibility in the male's presence. The *peacock, curtain, farm-girl, the look of the 'other' and desire* become correlated. The peacock beckons coyly and George is irritated and fascinated with its charms and aloofness.

The curtain arrests the male gaze by hiding the woman but also hides her look which transforms her into the subject. It offers an exchange of positions. It hides the desire for the 'other's' look. It offers anxiety and titillation in what might be, that is that she may be looking at him. It becomes a symbol of the impossibility of locating and blending with the 'other's' look. It adds to the ephemeral and mysteriousness of the 'woman's' body.

It presents a mysteriousness and is the source of fabrication. Georges for instance has just missed seeing the woman and what captures his gaze is the curtain. It implies a contrast between reality and appearance and becomes a substitute object, being sexual in its own right. It defers and offers the pleasure of vision. The curtain itself becomes impregnated with desire. The curtain presents the idea of offering a displacement in relation to the basic image of the real and desirable woman rather than straightforward images as nude photographs do.

The peacock-woman is real to Georges but what the subject perceives as real is subjective and Simon makes no claims to the objective accuracy of his perception.

The *barn-girl* is the central focus of this image and represents a *central point of fabrication and desire to see* for the narrators of *La Route des Flandres* along with Corrine, both of whom are conceived as supremely sexual:

...vivre une vie de sons sans plus de consistance que ce rideau sur lequel nous croyions voir le
paon brodé remuer palpiter respirer imaginant rêvant à ce qu'il y avait derrière...[RF:259]

This illustrates the men's situation where they embroider upon reality and that the unreal 'woman' is reflective of men's sexual fantasies. The imagery attributed to the woman in the barn will later weave its way into the representation of relationship between Corrine and Georges and she too becomes an 'unreal object.' Direct physical contact never occurs with the

peacock-woman, however it retains strong aesthetic appeal throughout so that it later invades as Georges touches Corrine. The narrators connect her ostensibly incidental characteristics with the more universal patterns of feminine appearance and conduct. They regard her as a model representative of her sex and her delicate bird-like skin as that of the eternally seductive female. The resultant effect is to divest the women of their individuality and merge them all.

elle ne reparut pas à la fenêtre, mais seulement le *paon*, d'un blanc grisâtre, immobile [RF:60]

Georges has hoped to end his adventures in the triumph of capturing this alluring peacock-woman but in her place he finds an ugly hideous deformed old woman whose hideous deformities symbolically reveal 'time's' eventual conquest of even the loveliest of women. The bird has indirectly (de)represented her. In Georges' eyes the woman is the corruption of femininity, embodied in the grace and voluptuousness and above all the radiance and exuberance of youth. In this woman's presence, Georges senses the ominous aura of death that mirrors his own destiny. For the narrators of *La Bataille de Pharsale* and *Histoire* the mother, grandmother, elderly females and soldiers become the principle envoys of death.

...ces désirs virginaux frais guettant la *ille* entrevue tu souviens-tu nous guettions levions sans cesse la tête vers cette fenêtre ce *rideau de filet* [...] tu l'as vue *elle* vient juste de regarder *se montrer et se cacher de nouveau* [...] Le *paon* remue encore, il y avait un *paon* tissé dans le *rideau de filet* [...] nous nous usant les yeux à force de guetter [...] essayant de deviner ce bouillonnement caché des passions... [RF:114-115]

paon énigmatique [RF:256]

mystérieux [RF:249]

délicate gorge d'oiseau [RF:254]

[paon] palpitant [RF:254]

la longue queue de l'oiseau [RF:255]

The *mysterious* of Corrine's sex and the *peacock-woman's* mysteriousness are correlated.

The peacock represents the *vanity and shamelessness* of women:

oiseau vaniteux fat stupide [RF:273]

oiseau symbolique de l'impudique [...] *paon*[RF:249]

Because 'woman' and peacock are correlatives of each other this description applies to all women. '*Woman*' has been generalized and constantly referred to as '*elle*' and '*la*'. The peacock which has been used for the barn-girl comes into full swing in the sexual act between Georges and Corrine when images from the past emerge and establish themselves in the present of Georges' experience.

seins blancs bleutâtres entre les *pans de coq de roche* du kimono s'écartant leurs pointe lilas mauve [HI:374]

A lot of the representation of women is fabrication and here the woman's sexual parts, her kimono, her breasts and the peacock are juxtaposed.

SWAN/LEDA

Again this adds to the eternal situation of the sexual adventure by way of archetypal imagery.

The image arises whilst in *bed* with Corrine:

son autre bras semblait *ramper* le long d'elle-même comme un *animal* comme un *col de cygne*
invertébré se faufilant le long de la hanche de Leda[RF:248]

In bed Georges likens Corrine to a swan and then to the Leda in Greek mythology. She represents Leda and the swan, lover and the beloved as she strokes her own body. Georges is more preoccupied with the mental image of the myth than the specifics, since the primary concern is to evoke the sensuous immediacy of his own experience. '*Hanche*' is also applied to the horse-woman motif. This imagery arises in part because of the associations established within the *peacock motif*.

CREATURE

The notion of a creature being outside of 'man' adds to the mysteriousness of 'woman' and her sex which fascinates and draws the male narrator but never satiates the male pursuer.

Additionally the reference to 'woman' being a creature is extended in contemplation of the sexual act and her anonymity. Part of her attraction stems from her ambiguous nature. Penetration of 'woman' could be seen as symbolic of trying to fathom the mysteries of life. Man's partner is

reduced to her most basic structure whereby all the social, intellectual and conversational qualities of 'woman' are placed in doubt and often not taken into consideration. Occasionally the male accepts the woman as a human being but more commonly they suspect women of having faculties irreducible to (hu)man categories.

By describing the sexual woman as a creature this allows for the nymphomaniac aspect of her to emerge which makes such a sexually aroused and aware woman more accessible to the male narrator. This would apply equally in the transition to an *ass* and other animal imagery employed. The fact that the sexually aware woman is described in such extremes must indeed indicate that many of the representations of women are not 'real' for there is no moderate sex, no moderate woman or man. Everything is described under extreme conditions and Simon takes archetypal situations and characters to show what is relevant to all humans even if dealing only in this area of the human experience.

This imagery illustrates the *mysteriousness of 'woman'*

...parlant d'elle [...] comme d'une *espèce de créature étrangère [...] étrangère à l'espèce humaine tout entière* (y compris les autres femmes) employant donc pour parler d'elle à peu près les mêmes mots, les mêmes intonations que s'il s'était agi d'un de ces objets parmi lesquels il rangeait sans doute les vedettes de cinéma (privées de toute réalité, sauf féérique), les *cheveaux* [...] [êtres] d'une *nature hybride, ambiguë*, pas tout à fait humains, pas tout à fait objets, inspirant à la fois le respect et l'irrespect par la rencontre, la réunion en eux d'éléments composants (réels ou supposés) disparates - *humains et inhumains* -, ce pourquoi sans doute il *parlait d'elle à la façon des maquignons de leur bêtes*...[RF:132-133]

Again this employs horse imagery.

ce caractère inhumain, ou hors de l'humain de Corrine [RF:133]

This is used to illustrate the feminine sexual creature who is outside the 'normal' feminine constraints. Corrine is the supreme sexual being to Iglésia and this culminates in his fascination of her being and also transfers to Georges' fabrication and fantasy of their affair which he brings with him to his own 'actual' affair.

The tendency towards *infidelity* is indicated:

cocufié, donc, non par une *perfide créature féminine* [RF:79]

WATER/SPONGE/MUSSEL

This illustrates the *mysteriousness of 'woman's' sexuality*:

...et elle - c'est-à-dire sa *chair* [...] *respirant* [...] *se dilatant et se contractant* tout à tour comme si l'air pénétrait en elle non par sa bouche, ses poumons, mais par toute sa peau, comme si elle était faite d'une *matière semblable à celle des éponges* [...] *se dilatant et se contractant, semblable à ces fleurs, ces choses marines à mi-chemin entre le végétal et l'animal, ces madrépores, palpitant délicatement dans l'eau...*[RF:222]

This emphasizes the delicacy of 'woman' and she is perceived as a dispenser of life-forces, of the most vital and necessary life-producing elements in the natural world and is juxtaposed with *sea and water* and *mother-earth*.

This imagery describes woman's *genitalia*:

langue dans sa bouche [...] fente la *moule ce coquillage au goût de sel* entrouvert [HI:124]

This contributes to the oral sex motif but additionally the stifling and deathly side of women's 'sexuality'. (Refer to the clay sub-section of the abstract category.)

SNAIL

The snail's *movements describe the sexual act*:

[bouts] sa *minuscule coquille en colimaçon* [...] *cornes* quand je les touchai pouvant *s'ériger* et *se rétracter*[RF:246]

GRASSHOPPER

The grasshopper's *movements describe the sexual act*:

c'est tout de même pas la première fille que tu *sautes*[BP:48]

Tu parles d'une *sauterelle* Qui est-ce? [...] tu *la sautes* [...] Tu *sautes la sauterelle* Ah ah ah [...] elle est bon celle-là tu trouves pas Tu *sautes la*[HI:222]

Lambert discusses Corrine with the narrator in a particularly smutty way not uncommon to his character.

SPIDER/HAWK/BOVINE

These describe the *non-sexual and old women*:

araignées dévoreuses dans ce sombre costume de veuve [HI:230]

rapace femelle [HI:241]

ce déhanchement, ce dandinement maladroit et douloureux commun aux femmes un peu fortes et aux *animals de basse-cour* [HI:246]

The antique dealer who is one of few women with a profession is described as calculating, monstrous and attributed the same characteristics as the male banker from whom the narrator attempts to acquire a bank loan but fails. This woman is equated with the downfall of the family fortune. She is also attributed a nicotine stained moustache and wears black like Marie of *L'Herbe*. She does not parade herself but rather dresses modestly - the antithesis of Sabine.

MONKEY/DOG

Such imagery describes the *phallus* which works in a similar way to that emergent from the *ass and phallus* associations:

long *membre de chien ou de singe* rouge vif dans le verdoisement [HI:342]

The narrator visualizes coitus between Corrine and Iglésia. Note the juxtaposition with the *vegetal* motif.

MONKEY/FISH/ASS

This imagery describes the phallus and sexuality as a *primal need*:

...*Muscle et un couple de glandes de singe* comme la *carotte* qui fait avancer l'âne sauf que celle-là a une grosse tête borgne comme à la fois *un oeil et une bouche muette de poisson* comme chez ces *organismes primaires*...[HI:374]

FROG

Frogs make their presence felt in the *background* of the sexual act:

...[grenouilles] elle peut voir la *délicate peau verte et si fine de leur cou se gonfler sous leur bouche* elle sent sa main sur la sienne [...] les *grenouilles* ont une voix noir...[LC:94]

The positioning of these together renders this passage implicitly sexual for the man's presence is rendered sensual, prohibiting and oppressive as is the noise of the frogs. Later in the text it is implied that the same couple copulate and because of past imagery the description of the frogs could be construed as similar to the penis during copulation.

Frog describe the *movement of post-coitus*:

Elle fouille aussi profond qu'elle peut dans son vagin en *fléchissant* encore plus les genoux pour écarter les cuisses. Elle a *l'air de grenouille* [LC:166]

The *deflowered* woman is presented as awkward as she attempts to wipe traces of semen from her vagina in order to hide any trace of this transgression. The man has not practiced withdrawal and then she is described like a frog as she *'essui son con.'*

BUTTERFLY

The image of the butterfly describes the *coital position*:

[*papillon*] ne bouge pas [...] couple enlacé contre le mur de briques est apparemment immobile
[TR:19]

Endnotes

1. 'Poulliche' is defined as :
 - 1) Jument âgée de moins de trois ans
 - 2) Jeune femme fringante
2. 'Alezan'. Is defined as:
 - i) cheval dont la robe est rougeâtre / se dit d'un cheval de couleur fauve
3. Women are treated impersonally elsewhere:

[Visage] Celui de la mariée est de ce type impersonnel et interchangeable [TR:168]

...jeune marié jette un rapide coup d'oeil en direction de la porte refermée de l'estaminet puis regarde de nouveau en souriant à côté de lui le visage anonyme dans les voiles blancs... [TR:170]
4. '*Chevauchant*' also generates the idea of writing whereby different motifs and areas of language straddles other parts.
5. 'Chevaux, n. pl. Vx. Cavaliers' are defined as: soldats qui combattaient à cheval. Such a definition illustrates further associations by the similar sound of chevaux and cheveux, between hair, sex and battle.
6. 'Chienne. n.f. (1740. Acad.)' is defined as : Femme sensuelle et sans moralité , qui cède au premier venu ii)chien, chienne n. Dans quelques locutions, indique un degré extrême de difficulté, un état insupportable (vivre, mourir, être enterré comme un chien = dans un total abandon)
7. The hole motif is ever-present even as the abyss or unfilled parts of the novel, unfulfilled desire and that at the heart of things in the final discovery of the narrators there is a void and nothing is sure. It has numerous variations throughout the texts. These include the umbrella/snake/dragon motif [RF:216]; the notion of the penis

disappearing into pubic hair and disappearing out of sight of those spying upon copulating lovers indicating a limited vision such as the boys in *Triptyque*; the cigarette disappearing into **grass** [HE:250]. Other examples to be noted can be found at [RF:181], [TR:47], [TR:56], [TR:66], [TR:20], [TR:16-17], [TR:86], [LC:142], [LC:143-144].

8. *Triptyque* celebrates a true act of generation and the production out of existing matter of completely new forms. This basis is instrumental for other scenes and is continually retrieved and foreshadowed from the original on pages 13-17 of *Triptyque*.

CHAPTER THREE

NUTRITIONAL

The language in this chapter draws from those before by its very nature, but additionally highlights other areas of 'sexuality', which are numerous enough to warrant their own inventory.

This category is based upon the notion of warmth, security and coitus being as primal an act as eating. 'Woman' is perceived as the desirable 'other' to be eaten, devoured and tasted. Thus the entire sexual act is transformed into a frenzy of eating and intoxication. The words produced have a sexual sense because of their connotative charge. Corrine and the milky maiden are central to this notion.

The images refer to the practice of oral sex and the hunger for communion by the abolition of all the barriers of everyday life. The entire language becomes eroticized through the oral, food and devouring motifs and everything is based in coitus, positing a biological and physiological need and desire. Drawn into this cycles are the themes of life, death, nutrition, reproduction - all shown to be quite natural parts of the life process, which is indeed cyclical.

DITCH

The *ditch* establishes as in the vegetal and animal categories, a framework from which 'sexuality' based in nutritional language is to be understood:

...je me jetai par terre *mourant de femme* pensant *les chevaux en mangent bien pourquoi pas moi* j'essayai de m'imaginer me persuader que j'étais un cheval, je gisais mort au fond du fossé *dévoré* par les fourmis mon corps tout entier se changeait lentement [...] en une matière insensible et alors ce serait *l'herbe*... [RF:244]

The ditch is by association made correlative of the lips of the vulva, being covered with **grass**, which is correlated with *pubic hair*. Georges' mind moves freely between the ditch and making love to Corrine because of similarities created by language and similar generators.

mon corps qu'un foetus ratatiné rapetissé couché entre les lèvres du fossé [RF:243]

Reminiscent of the womb motif in the animal, vegetal and abstract categories, the narrator feeds and receives nutrition and shelter from the ditch/vagina/womb.

TASTE/HUNGER

A woman appeals to the sense of *taste* and can't be desired without being tasted:

...qu'elle faisait penser [...] pas penser, plutôt quelque chose comme *saliver*) à quelque chose comme un des *sucres d'orge* (et *sirop*, et *orgeat*, *des mots aussi pour elle, pour cela*), de ces

sucreries enveloppées de papier cellophane aux teintes acides (papiers dont le froissement cristallin, la couleur seule, la matière même [...] provoque déjà les *réflexes physiologiques* ...[RF:46]

...elle avait peu près l'air et la taille d'une hostie (c'est-à-dire quelque chose d'irréel, *dé fondant*, qui ne peut être *goûté, connu et possédé que par la langue, la bouche, la déglutition...* [RF:131]

cette robe *rouge* couleur de *bonbon anglais* [...] elle était quelque chose à quoi pensait non son esprit, mais ses *lèvres, sa bouche* [RF:221]

(Refer to that relating to Corrine's dress and the colour of red/coral in the vegetal and animal categories.)

...première fois que je voyais une femme aussi nue) m'emplit alors d'une trouble qu'exprime assez bien le mot *libidineux* avec sa consonance un peu rose, un peu molle, plissée pour ainsi dire par la répétition des mêmes syllabes et de sons évocateurs (*lit, bite, noeud*) ...[BP:139]

Language defers the revelation of what lies behind it, as this word evokes a feeling in the subject and simultaneously points to and disguises a fuller less abstract semantic content, '*lit*', '*bite*' and '*noeud*' which in turn colours the actual phonic material of the signifier, that is the word semi-conceals its sexual associations. This also shows that the emotion aroused by the sight of human flesh does not exclusively apply to the human female, as a series of substitutes and series of bodies are given such as a rubber doll.

The narrator speaks of the '*odalisque*' he sees and this is a very good summation of how '*sexuality*' works in Simon, that is it is a feeling worked through by connotation and the association of language.

délicieuse mère [HI:52]

'Woman' is perceived as tasty and satisfying.

...<<S'appelait Virginie>>. Et Blum : <<Beau nom pour un putain. Donc cette virginale Virginie haletante et nue, ou plus que nue, c'est-à-dire vêtue - ou plutôt dévêtue - d'une de ces chemises que n'ont sans doute été inventées que pour permettre aux mains emprisonnées de glisser par-dessous ... [RF:179]

'Woman' is seemingly designed purely to be touched by men.

The language employed indicates 'sexuality' as a *primal need*:

on comprend qu'il parlent du cheval [...] sinon peut-être un clin d'œil équivoque entre deux lads [...] avec leurs petites gueules de frappes *mal nourries* [RF:48]

tirer sur tout ce qui remue en face de lui, au point que c'est devenu un réflexe aussi naturel que de trousser les jupons ou *lamper sa soupe* [HI:174]

This extraction situated within the frame of war and battle indicates the tenuous situation of soldiers and this along with 'sexuality' and food are shown to be primal and age-old rituals.

FRUIT/FOOD

This shows a woman's *s'exuality*:

transparence de la capeline *cerise* qui *rosissait* son visage [RF:138]

cette robe *rouge couleur de bonbon anglais* (mais peut-être cela aussi l'avait-il inventé, c'est-à-dire la couleur, ce *rouge acide* [RF:221]

<< Corrine >> faisait penser à >> *corail* << ?...[RF:221]

This implies that Iglésia may have projected this red dress and its concurrent images, simply because of her name and all the evocations of 'coral'. There is a continual projection of Corrine through both Iglésia and Georges. Alot is Iglésia's impression ostensibly of Corrine, but with continual input by Georges and the merging of narrators, it is difficult at times to discern exactly who is responsible for such representations, not that in the end it matters, for all individuality is in a sense negated and the experience of man is what emerges as more significant. Cherries and the colour red serve as generators for Corrine, as does 'coral'. Many associations are made because of her name sounding like this.

...penchée en avant dans sa robe couleur de *fruit* de feuillages . . Les branches remuèrent je pouvais voir ses jambes nues mais pas le reste du corps disparaissant dans les *feuilles* agitées de brèves secousses Elle était écorchée en grimpant Un mince filet de sang descendait le long de son mollet [...] Puis elles s'écartèrent... [HI:122]

The narrator speaks of his wife and fruit acts as a generator. The text then moves to a representation of Corrine, which is evoked by a memory of her as a young girl climbing a cherry tree. At the time this was evocative sexually. Noticeably her skinned leg reminds one of the skinned rabbit in *Triptyque* and the probable figure of Corrine as an older woman stretched out evocatively on the hotel bed.

épaisse goutte de sang frais qui commençait à se coaguler rouge encore brillante comme les *cerises* [HI:154]

Blood and cherries are evocative of each other. Corrine has skinned her leg as a child and the impression is entirely sensual for the narrator.

elle a replié ses jambes toujours gainées des bas de coton noir *roulés en boudin* [TR:160]

This is either the couple in the barn or the filmed couple or in fact both. It is reminiscent of the

rabbit with its congealed blood and skinned with its outer membrane peeled off like the skin of a sausage.

Other examples using *food* to describe 'woman's' s'exuality' are:

réclames [...] de *bières* avec des jeunes femmes aux *lèvres rouge* [RF:116]

tendres pieds *couleur d'abricot* [RF:171]

[talons] teinté d'*orangé* [RF:259]

sur les reins duquel se nouent [...] les jambes *laiteuses*, pieds aux talons couleur d'*abricot* [RF:181]

[pieds] rose *abricot* [BP:24]

[cuisses] *abricot* tango [BP:48]

teintée de rose *abricot* [BP:198]

seins sous la robe couleur de *fruits de pêches* [HI:120]

pieds aux talons *abricots* [HI:270]

seins sous la robe couleur de *fruits de pêches* [...] *peau de fruits* [HI:384]

MAN'S SEX

Man's sex is perceived as *life-giving*:

impétueuse *laitance* [RF:180]

[membres] fait de *lait et de miel* [BP:92]

voie *lactée* répandue sur son ventre [...] comme *du lait caillé* [HI:355]

sperme laiteux [TR:66]

Man's sex is *abstrusely described*:

le renflement en forme d'*olive* [BP:40]

A pigeon is described like the above a few pages earlier but implicitly this is the semen of ejaculation. The pigeon is correlated with the sexual position in this text.

The penis feeds off the existence of man and drains him of his usual existence, his non-sexual state. This shows the importance and *power of the phallus*:

poussant comme une étrangère parasite [RF:242]

rapetisser à mesure qu'il grandissait se nourrissant de moi [RF:243]

The penis is described as *vulnerable* by using *vegetation* in conjunction with the language employed in Triptyque to describe a *dying rabbit*:

pommes pendantes oscillant [HI:126]

The penis is the source of much *pleasure*:

plaisir fruits [HI:126]

Additionally man's sex is described as something to be *devoured*, when fellatio as opposed to cunnilingus is described:

[membre] *couronné d'une fraise rouge* [TR:61]

WOMAN'S SEX

Many nouns and adjectives describe the *vulva* and *vagina* as *food* or they are equated with the action of *eating*:

miel [RF:186]

goût de coquillage salé [RF:243]

salade [RF:245]

jus vert [RF:245]

rhubarbe [RF:245]

(cou) comme lait [RF:273]

ouverte comme un fruit [RF:276]

pêche [RF:276]

fruit [TR:42]

fruit qu'on mord [LC:97]

prune noire et gluante [LC:149]

fendue éclatée comme un fruit mûr [BP:38]

ladousseur [BP:178]

odeur sucrée des orangers fleurs [HI:274-275]

chèvre nourricière [RF:243]

mamelons [BP:214]

pétrissant [seins] [LC:86]

[pétrit] la boule tiède et gonflée [LC:101]

langue écartant [BP:44]

sorte de végétation, comme parasitaire, se nourrissant de [HE:249]

Louise uses the same language, as men, interestingly in *L'Herbe* to describe her own sex.

VERBS SUBSTANTIVES ADVERBS

The texts are replete with examples of fellatio and cunnilingus and the *penis* becomes correlative with the *tongue*.

There are numerous examples of *fellatio* alone:

elle le prit d'abord entre ses lèvres puis tout entier dans sa bouche [RF:245]

dans la bouche [BP:44]

gland découverte *brillant de salive* quand elle recule sa *bouche* [BP:46]

This recalls imagery used to describe the fish and penis correlation in the animal category, specifically '*brillant*'.

...bouche ouverte [...] langue rose de la fille va et vient sur le gland découvert et gonflé [...] lèche le bourrelet mauve [...] lécher le gland [...] [gland] elle dirige vers sa bouche [...] pointe de sa langue sur la fraise humide ... [TR:86]

bouche est rose. Chaque fois qu'elle parle on entrevoit ses *dents* et quelquefois sa *langue, rose aussi et mouillé*. Lorsqu'il l'embrasse ses *lèvres serrées s'ouvrent peu à peu* [LC:97]

There are multiple examples of *fellatio*, *cunnilingus* and the *drunken*' effect of intercourse:

ivres [RF:250]

entêtant [LC:12]

comme un enfant goulé [RF:245]

léchant [RF:242]

[langue] léchant à petits coups [BP:75]

lécher à petits coups de langue l'énorme gland [BP:159]

langue humide et râpeuse sur sa peau [LC:97]

[anus] langue rouge et musclée de l'homme vient lécher [TR:195]

sucant la parfum de ses mamelles de bronze [RF:243]

[petits animaux] tétant [BP:75]

succion [TR:160]

suce [TR:160]

[bouche de l'homme] monte un bruit mouillé de succion [LC:101]

lèvres étroitement moulées sur le cylindre du membre [TR:161]
l'enfonçant parfois profondément dans sa bouche [TR:160]
étouffe s'échappe de la bouche de l'homme [TR:162]

lappaer [RF:243]
lappant son chose rose [RF:242]
lappant [RF:243]
[source] lapper [RF:273]
essaim de mouches lappant le lait [HI:275]

je buvais [RF:243]
nous nous buvions l'un l'autre [RF:245]
buvant [son ventre] [RF:246]
buvant [BP:75]
salives se mêlent [LC:100]

désaltérant [RF:245]
me désalterer [BP:47]

engloutissant [BP:75]
[coulée de chair laiteuse] l'engloutit dans sa bouche l'engloutit [TR:162]

boufferais [RF:244]
bouffant [RF:244]
[faim] apaiser [RF:245]
mâcher [RF:245]
m'enivrant [RF:243]
chak plésir kil gougoutait [BP:178]
lèvres empourprées par une rosée ambroisie [BP:92]

This is taken from the *Golden Ass* .

MILK

Milk is at the centre of the aphorism indicating the incomprehensibility of the sexual act as the origins of one's being, using milk as a fundamental image of the life source:

...Qui a bien pu donner à Dieu l'idée de créer des êtres mâles et femelles et de les faire s'unir? L'homme, voilà qu'il lui donne la femme. Elle a deux tétons sur la poitrine et un petit pertuis entre les jambes. Mettez là une petite *goutte de semence* humaine et il en naîtra un corps grand comme ça : cette pauvre petite goutte deviendra chair, sang, os, nerfs, peau. Job l'a bien dit au chapitre dix : >>Ne m'avez vous pas traité *comme du lait*, et fait *cailler comme du fromage*?>> Dans toutes ses oeuvres, Dieu a quelque chose de rigolo. ..[RF:97, Martin Luther]

This indicates the incomprehensibility of the sexual act as the origins of one's being. (Refer to the subsection of origins in the abstract category.)

Milk comes to be represented as a *life-source* and 'woman' comes to be represented as life-giving. She provides the milk of oblivion inherent in the sexual act. On the Flanders Road the soldiers are exhausted and take shelter in the dark and warm barn, as if returning to the womb. A young woman appears and is illuminated by a lantern she holds up. She becomes for the man a warm, milky, virginal and unobtainable symbol of woman. Her lamp shining in the darkness seems to give them hope. Blum does not see her and is the only one who dies in the Prisoner of War camp. Though the men never see her again she emerges throughout the novel in the context of love-making and infidelity as she merges with other women:

...chevauchant à travers la temps la nuit [...] pour parvenir jusqu'à elle la découvrir la trouver *tiède* demi nue et *laiteuse* dans cette écurie à la *lueur* de cette lanterne : je me rappelle que tout d'abord elle la tient levée à bout de bras puis tandis que nous commençons à desseller elle

l'abaissa peu à peu sans doute fatiguée [...] à la fine elle s'évanouit, disparaissant comme si elle ne nous avait attendus là que pour nous être aussitôt enlevée nous ... [RF:115]

The maiden is presented only to be snatched away, becoming the source of much fabrication and transferral. The men's final discovery is that of death, making a play on the insidious similarity of 'la mort' and 'l'amour' in french.

cette sorte de *tiédeur* pour ainsi dire *ventrale* au sein de de laquelle elle se tenait, irréalité et demi nue [RF:37]

The maiden is viewed as source of light and hope. She is what the men have come to discover and is supremely sexual. She is first glimpsed in the barn, which itself represents warmth and the womb.

Mais ce n'était pas pour *boire* que nous étions venus c'était cette *fille* ce trouble [...] cette *chair* entrevue l'espace d'un instant [RF:117]

This represents the desire for the flesh and not the intellect of 'woman'.

sa chair *laiteuse*, le cou *laiteuse* [RF:37]

une chose *tiède*, blanche comme le *lait*, qu'elle venait tirer [RF:39]

blancheur [RF:251]

suave et *tiède* apparition [RF:251]

l'apparition *laiteuse* [RF:261]

ventres *laiteux* [HI:270]

'Woman's skin also has the feel of cigarette paper which can be linked to the smoky and idyllic prose the ancestor read. Georges drinks the milk of oblivion, linked to the white ink of the ancestral papers. The milk/knowledge/ink motif is part of the motif as woman as a 'route' to knowledge. It is made clear in *L'Herbe*, where a group of schoolboys are described. Through metaphorical links parallels are suggested between knowledge obtained from books and from 'sexuality'. (Refer to the quote pertaining to this idea in the 'power of the phallus' section in the abstract category.)

comment dire *laiteuse lait plus blanc bleuâtre à force d'être blanc* [BP:47]

During the sexual act such an impression is evoked and the milk-imagery emerges not only from 'woman's' mammary glands but her entire body, whose blue white colour reminds the men of primal liquid. These images also refer to the fragile nature of her being, as the barn-girl melts away on leaving the barn, almost transparent in the light. She seems as unreal as an apparition. Her liquid body attracts man's touch, but may dissolve at the slightest contact.

corps *tiède* [BP:138]

On sighting the 'odalisque' the narrator immediately experiences a warm feeling.

Milk also combines to incorporate the notion of a woman to be *devoured* and *tasted*:

...Mais je l'ai assez vue pour savoir qu'elle est *comme du lait* [...] c'était exactement comme *du lait*, de la *crème répandue* [...] On avait seulement envie de se mettre à ramper et à *lécher* ...[RF:57]

Lui et ce *bol de lait* [RF:119]

...*laits* de ses seins [...] leurs bouts *rose-thé* mais humides brillants [...] (quand j'éloignai ma *bouche* il était d'un rose plus prononcé vif comme irrité enflammé d'une matière grumeleuse meurtrie... [RF:246]

'Woman' can equally *give life symbolically* through 'sexuality' or through birth, as is shown with Corrine, who hasn't given birth

in this novel but has given pleasure to many men. Georges discovers an infant-like dependency on her while drinking from her body - this dependency has no cultural or temporal boundaries. In *Triptyque* it is plausible that a much older Corrine does indeed have a grown son, but still retains her captivating charms. She is perceived as sexual in every text, with varying degrees:

elle qui n'avait jamais *allaité désaltéré* été *bue* par d'autres que des *rude lèvres d'homme*
[RF:246]

Milk is a symbol of the *intoxication* and the effect of *oblivion* upon sexual partners:

lait de l'oubli [RF:247]

Milk becomes a basic image in 'sexuality' to show that *milk is to a suckling , what naturalness is to s'exuality*:

lueur laiteuse répandue sur le drap [HI:355]

Through the latin words the schoolboys read and their very sensuality, the boys become excited. They are said to suck the ink as if they in fact were unconsciously sucking breasts.

elle suçaient dans comprendre le lait, le principe [...] de la vie même [HE:131]

Milk is again seen as the source of life and is a strong sexual generator. Just as 'woman' is perceived as life-giver, she is also a life-taker symbolically in the sexual act. Woman is the symbolic dispenser of life and pleasure. She offers nourishment, warmth and security found in the natural world. But her womb is the womb of the unconscious where man loses his ego and in so doing is reunited with the formlessness of the liquid world. The primacy of milk imagery as a sensual generator is thus intimately related with 'woman' as a maternal figure. It points to the narrator's relationship of dependence on the 'other' for their psychic and biological survival.

REPRODUCTION

...cette attitude ancestrale dans laquelle elle s'accroupit pour satisfaire ses besoins - parce qu'elle ne dispose que d'une position pour les satisfaire tous, celle-ci : les jambes repliées, les cuisses pressées contre les flancs : les genoux venant toucher les ombreuses aisselles - mais maintenant comme si le sol avait basculé, l'envoyant à renverse, telle quelle, sur le dos, présentant maintenant non à la terre mais vers le ciel comme dans l'attente d'une de ces fécondations légendaires, de quelque tintante pluie d'or... [RF:180]

'Woman's' sexual needs are placed in juxtaposition with her child-bearing ability and these positions are shown to be as timeless as life itself - stressing the very naturalness.

femmes protégeant l'enfant sorti de leur ventre le fruit de leurs entrailles [RF:292]

fruit de son ventre se renversant les relevant les écartant bronze clair pour se faire fructifier [HI:311]

'Woman' is perceived as a dispenser of the life-force and thus she is also associated with *water* and the *earth, obvious life-producing elements*. In *Histoire* the narrator recalls his wife's and Corrine's love of the sea and as a child. Corrine is often associated with sea:

cheveux moulles [HI:233]

Notice the association with *hair and water*, two most basic images placed in juxtaposition. (Refer to the clay subsection in the abstract category.)

CHAPTER FOUR

ABSTRACT

This category is so-named as a number of ideas and feelings are generated whose features are proliferous and the affinities created evade precise definition. The language incorporated is vitalistic to a comprehension of 'sexuality', but is not rich in itself, rather it must be conceived as part of a wider whole which carries with it erotic connotations. This category is a physical abstraction of those ideas underlined in the introduction given on 'sexuality'.

The language is centred in and about coitus or the sexual act. The language is based in violence, battle, the instinctual and primal need in the act of 'sexuality' and the eternal nature of this situation. There is a personal aggression at work and a larger cosmological aggression which integrates with sexual experience. The symbiosis between life and death and the awareness of discontinuity is the basis of the conflict and aggression which underpins the representations of 'sexuality'.

'Sexuality' doesn't emerge as pleasant, but rather as physiological and as a brutal awakening to man's existential condition. 'Woman' emerges as the 'other' and there is a notable absence of love in sex.

There is a powerful language of intoxication, hurriedness, solitariness, force and power which emerges within the sexual act. The power of the phallus and its strong urge is perceived as all consuming.

Additionally there emerges a strong representation of the oral, especially through the battle motif, which additionally informs upon the 'instinctual side' of 'sexuality', and emphasizes the tenuous side, the awareness of life until death and so forth.

The narrators relate personal experiences of battle, war and anguish to their sexual relationships since the domain of eroticism is that of warfare. In one way or another physical suffering characterizes almost all the sexual activity in Simon and the demands made on the body in both are extreme.

Also the examination of the series and groups that arise from internal and external generators are made from battle. They evoke armies, sexual encounters, sports, combats and paintings. Precise observations in latin about battles are diffused throughout the experiences of the man as soldier, lover and man, particularly in *Histoire and La Bataille de Pharsale*.

The Simonian concept of 'sexuality' is perhaps represented in short with the following passage. This is not the only passage which may be extracted for such a reason, but comprises most of the ideas to be discussed in this category:

celui dont, il lui faut probablement admettre qu'il l'a engendré, c'est-à-dire tiré du néant originel, créé à partir de rien (un frottement de peau, une excitation de glandes, un prurit, un orgasme) et par un acte sinon volontaire en tout cas éprouvé projetant hors de lui dans un spasme (semblable, assimilable à une courte mort, un brusque anéantissement: en réalité une brève éclipse de cette lancinante conscience comme si celle-ci cessait d'exister pendant la durée correspondant à cette parcelle d'elle-même qui se détache dans un foudroyant arrachement dont on ne sait au juste s'il s'accomplit à la faveur d'un *paroxysme de plaisir ou douleur* - puisque aussi d'ailleurs il semble que dans ce moment se produise une *confusion, l'éjaculation étant ressentie à la fois par la chair et l'esprit comme une sorte d'éblouissement sombre, élatement chamarré de plumes de coq s'éparpillant dans le cerveau de l'homme en même temps que dans l'obscur et rouge nuit de la matrice*, d'où peut-être (*fusée, explosion*) l'expressuib populaire <<s'envoyer en air>>, qui semble remonter à ces *mythes* originels de la Gigantomachie où des créatures aux noms (Ouranos, Saturnes) et aux *dimensions de monde s'accouplent, luttent farouchement* sur le fond bleu nuit de ciel, encore sans astres, et ce mâle frustré de son désir, sa géante conquête assaillie (*saillie*) se déroband d'un coup de reins, la semence répandant, voie lactée, pollen polluant notre mère de terre d'où lève aussitôt sous nos yeux horrifiés une descendance maudite), projetant donc au dehors de lui une *partie de lui-même destinée à lui survivre*, c'est-à-dire à le

perpétuer et donc, en définitivement, une *prolongation de lui-même*, si elle est apparemment la négation, le contraire, et donc, forcé de se reconnaître en elle [HE145-146]

This recalls Bataille's thesis of human 'sexuality' and brings in many aspects of Simon's. Additionally it illustrates the force of 'sexuality' and the trauma inherent in the concept of one's origins. It illustrates the absurdity and mystery of the sexual act and one's origins. The eternal side of procreation and the natural function is stressed.

LIFE/DEATH

A symbiosis between life and death is what punctuates the entire representation of 'sexuality', delineating the biological and existential character of man:

Je croyais apprendre à vivre, j'apprenais à mourir [RF:7, Léonard de Vinci]

La volupté, c'est l'étreinte d'un corps de mort par deux êtres vivants. Le <<cadavre>> dans ce cas, c'est le temps assassiné pour un temps et rendu consubstantiel au toucher. [RF:239, Malcom de Chazal]

DITCH

The frame of the ditch once again establishes itself as central to an understanding of Simon's sexuality, but not as directly as previously established:

(il ne dormait pas, se tenait parfaitement *immobile* et non pas une grange à présent, non pas la lourde et poussiéreuse senteur du foin desséché, de l'été aboli, mais cette impalpable, nostalgique et tenace exhalaison du temps lui-même, des années mortes, et lui flottant dans les ténèbres, écoutant le silence, la nuit, la paix, l'imperceptible respiration d'une femme à côté de lui, et au bout d'un moment il distingua le second rectangle dessiné par la glace de l'armoire reflétant l'obscur lumière de la fenêtre - l'*armoire éternellement vide des chambres d'hôtel [...] destinés à ne jamais rien renfermer sinon leur vide poussiéreux, poussiéreux cercueil des fantômes reflétés de milliers d'amants, de milliers de corps nus, furieux et moites, de milliers d'étreintes emmagasinées, confondues dans les glauques profondeurs de la glace inaltérable, virginale et froide* [RF:40].

This is indicative of the human sexual experience and also indicates the generative movement or similarity/tenuousness of the situation of war/sex and the way the narrator's mind moves fluidly from one situation to another. Ultimately the emptiness and solitariness of the erotic situation is stressed, whereby only momentary fusion is possible but in the end one is alone, and the partner (female) emerges as the 'other' - unknowable and alone/selfish.

encastrés l'un dans l'autre [RF:246]

The tenuous situation is underlined elsewhere:

de milliers d'hommes *croupissant* dans leur propre *humiliation*, *exclus du monde des vivants*, et pourtant *pas encore dans celui des morts* [RF:114]

toute cette *cochonnerie* n'avait pas encore rompu brisé en nous ce qui est comme l'hymen des jeunes gens ouvrant cette *blessure* déchirant quelque chose que plus jamais nous ne retrouverons cette virginité ces désirs virginaux frais guettant la fille entrevue [RF:114]

The breaking of the men's integrity and self-respect is compared to the traumatic experience of the hymen breaking, which equates the experience of war and 'sexuality'.

MAN'S SEX

On the whole man's sex is conceived as *forceful* and *weapon-like* while the woman's sexual organs are passive. There are exceptions.

Man's sex is perceived as *forceful*:

poteau [RF:174]

bâton [RF:174]

muscle [RF:181]

alène [RF:181]

pilon rouge sombre, luisant et *furieux* [RF:181]

tête d'ogive [RF:274]

bélier [RF:276]

pilon rouge entrant et sortant [BP:57]

énorme dos courbé montagne de viande [BP:75]

[*membre raidi*] plaqué contre son ventre [BP:119]

tenon bâton de chair [HI:126]

membre énorme rougeaud gonflé [HI:341]

rognon bleuâtre l'enfonçant roide enflammé colonne de porphyre [HI:342]

marbre [HI:342]

barbouillé de sang [HI:342]

raidi et musculeux [TR:16]

immobile, raidi [TR:66]

membre raidi [TR:86]

membre rigide [LC:109]

cylindre musculeux et chaud [LC:109]

fourreau [LC:142]

long membre raidi se tient [LC:163]

lâchant de long giclées de sperme noir [LC:163]

chair d'un blanc bleuté aux ombres vert d'eau sa bite rouge congestionnée de rouquin enfoncée en [BP:57]

Note the *vegetation* so closely associated with coitus. Such networks of associations are constant in Simon. One need only look at the positioning in the text of examples cited here.

couteau ensanglanté [TR:38]

(Refer to the rabbit sections of the this and the animal category.)

The *furiosity and frustration* of man's sex is indicated:

[fente] *bouche muette* [RF:274]

[fente] *oeil furieux et mort* [RF:274]

[oeil] *aveugles* à force d'habiter les ténèbres

exigeant suppliant de retourner aux humides et secrètes cachettes, la bouche d'ombre
[RF:274]

apoplectique hors de l'eau [RF:274]

percée au centre de son orifice comme un *oeil aveugle* [BP:212]

aveugle impatient [HI:371]

(avec cet aspect à la fois *terrible borgne turgescent furibond et perpétuellement frustré stupide de ces organes*) comme les parties viriles (membre et testicules) [HI:258]

This deals with machinery which is shown to have characteristics of the the phallus. Both are subject to decay and collapse.

Mans's sex is described as *eruptive*:

[membre viril] *sur le point d'éclater* [HI:110]

se gonflant [TR:66]

éclater [TR:66]

Additionally man's sex is *disruptive*, and this heightens the *vulnerability* of the *phallus* under such a force. The penis takes on a life of its own where it has power over the male and the female:

organe commun [ou si l'on préfère également étranger, car le membre de l'homme ne semble-t-il pas s'enfoncer à l'intérieur du corps de celui-ci comme il s'enfonce dans celui de la femme, s'y prolonger jusqu'au plus profond des entrailles par un membre égal et symétrique [RF:181]

lierre griffu se glissant le lon de mon dos [RF:243]

mes reins m'enserrant [RF:243]

enveloppant ma nuque [RF:243]

poussait sur lui [HE:131]

se servant de lui [HE:131]

enfonçant en lui ses racines [HE:131]

fragile organe pendant vulnérable entouré d'un buisson [BP:61-62]

Note the penis's juxtaposition with *vegetation*. The image above is extracted from a photo of warriors. Note use of '*pendant*' recalling the rabbit motif of *Triptyque*.

WOMAN'S SEX

The *womb and tomb* are correlative of each other and this correlation is fundamental to the notion of 'woman' as 'route' of the text, sexually and textually. Moments of fecundity are interspersed with periods of decay. The flesh of the earth and womb have been correlated. 'Woman's' role is multiple, ambiguous and ambivalent.

Simon believes man is produced in the womb with the sole purpose of invading the earth. A non-redemptive quality of 'woman's' sex is put forward as well as determining that this is 'woman's' only place within battle. Determined from the moment of conception, this biological function of procreation has not varied with time. Man has aggressively waged war and never learnt from his

actions. Progress is possible it seems only through chance. Progress is a pathetic attempt to mask the indescribable reality of the chaos of history.

Woman through *reproduction create soldiers*:

...l'orifice de cette matrice le creuset originel qu'il lui semblait voir dans les entrailles du monde comme semblables à ces moules dans lesquels enfant il avait appris à estamper soldats et cavaliers, rien qu'un peu de pâte pressée du pouce ... [RF:38-39]

The notion that women spawn soldiers is put forward . Women are moulded into representations of the procreative power. ¹

...moule humide d'où sortaient où j'avais appris à estamper en pressant l'argile de pouce les soldats fantassins cavaliers et cuirassiers se répandant de la boîte de Pandore (engence tout armée bottée et casquée) à travers le monde la gent d'armes ...[RF:244]

War and evilness emerge as a result of women, where only thing left is hope.

As an *earth symbol* the *female body* represents the *immobility found in the earth after death*, as in Louise lying in the *grass* acutely sensing her own 'sexuality' mingled with a death wish when she lies on the ground and when the grass licks her legs in comic ecstasy. Remembering the war O's thoughts in *La Bataille de Pharsale* turn suddenly to a woman, and like in *La Route des Flandres* her *body becomes a refuge from life's burdens*. The narrators wish to forget the horrors discovered in the universe. The womb also stresses to *return to an unformed state, physically, biologically and anthropologically*. At the base of this desire to return to the womb there remains a desire to unite with the object outside of himself. However 'woman' has this *dual nature and never satiates*. The fury of sex is opposed to and coordinate with the destructive nature of war.

Woman is the *provider of the oblivion and escape from linear time in the sexual act*:

une minuscule fente horizontale aux bords collés d'où pourrait couler d'où *jaillissait invisible le lait de l'oubli* [RF:247]

'Woman's' sex is perceived as *engulfing and strangulating*:

moule [RF:39]

poulpe [RF:39]

[chair] soyeuse et *brûlante* coiffer son gland [LC:142]

'Woman's' sex is perceived as *delicate and fragile* against the weight of the masculine force:

l'hymen...cette *blessure* [RF:114]

blessure [HE:249]

blessure [...] *forcée* [HI:180]

jumeaux mythologiques jaillis jusqu'à mi-corps d'une *blessure* de la terre [HI:126]

fendue comme un fruit [TR:42]

[replis] s'écartent sous sa pousée [LC:142]

[seins doux] bouts pâles fragiles [HI:110]

'Woman's' sex is *mysterious*:

chair obscur [LC:163]

COITAL ACT

Battle/Equestrian

Abstrusely coitus is described through the façade of battle. *La Bataille de Pharsale* is the most representative of the similarities established between battle and coitus of all the discussed texts. The latin and roman themes fully integrate the violent side and establishes themselves as a workable catalyst:

The violence of the sexual act mirrors the aggression on the battlefield or conversely:

mon estomac mes poumons mon coeur tout pêle-mêle remontaient m'obstruaient la gorge le sang battant [BP:82]

The narrator in the midst of battle and the tenuous situation serves to highlight the feeling like that which will describe coitus.

bruvante rumeur de sang [RF:225]

Battle, war and sex become virtual correlatives of one another:

...javelots épées lances comme ce jeu de jonchets [...] pièces crochues pourvues de barbes de pointes pilum frappant entrant et ressortant à plusieurs reprises de la blessure le renflement de sa pointe triangulaire arrachant aux lèvres le sang jaillissant par saccades brûlant Elle m'inonda se mit à hoqueter et crier balbutiant des mots sans suite donnant de violents coups de reins... [BP:40]

sa respiration devient plus rapide elle dit des mots sans suite entrecoupés [...] maintenant elle ne fait plus que crier presque tous ont la bouche ouverte sans doute crient-ils aussi [BP:122]

présentant leurs armes - ce qui, pour un ou deux farceurs, consiste à brandir en direction de l'objectif leur pénis raidi [BP:137-138]

un peu de sperme tombe sur la vieille capote militaire [TR:66]

The military motif presents itself at the most unexpected moments, even so subtly as in this instance as its presence is felt in the background.

Associations between the *steeplechase*, the *equestrian motif* and *battle and coitus* are established)

...par l'espèce de long *soupir* s'exhalant de la foule délivrée pâmée et vorace *non pas proprement parler un orgasme, mais en quelque sorte, un pré-orgasme, quelque chose comme au moment où l'homme pénètre la femme* ...[RF:158]

The steeplechase prefigures the moment of orgasm, thus rendering infinite the possible sexual and equestrian combinations.

tumultueux afflux du sang [RF:159]

organes malmenés et forcés [RF:159]²

Battle/Oral:

Battle and war come to be correlated with 'sexuality', particularly when centred about the *mouth and oral sex*:

...un peintre officiel avait été chargé de la représenter, plaçant à la tête des *soldats* [...] une femme vêtue d'une robe blanche que dénudait un de ses seins, coiffée d'un bonnet phrygien, *brandissant une épée et la bouche grand ouverte*... [RF:225]

s'enfonçant dans la bouche ouverte [BP:18]

Similar language is used for battle, arrows, and oral sex, particularly in fellatio. *La Bataille de Pharsale* and *Histoire* are replete with this imagery by utilizing latin texts as part of the text, which the narrator has read as a young boy and these continue to exert their force. With tales of battle and descriptions of paintings depicting battles such a theme is indeed worked through.

Dard dans la bouche [...] *dard rose* [BP:22]

Tongues, arrows, weapons and the penis are correlated through the associative networks. This recalls Cupid who shoots the 'arrow of love' or rather 'lust.'

enfoncé les soldats romains étaient armés du pilum lourd javelot par une courte pointe triangulaire en forme de Pilon. Bouche rose ouverte où. [BP:25]

...Maintenant il s'élance et presque aussitôt il recoit dans la bouche un coup de glaive dont la point ressort par la nuque non pas la mort mais le sentiment de ta mort ... [BP:120]

The mouth is the recipient of the male organ in love-making at times , but often the mouth through which penetration occurs does not belong to the real victim. In *Histoire* the mouth described is that of the model, but the pain is felt by the uncle, conforming to the reality of the protagonist's experience. Superficially separate adventures between the uncle and protagonist are brought together through the mouth. Neither is actually victimized by a wound to the mouth. Episodes where physical entry does take place are intimately related to the perilous nature of their situations.

For the uncle-narrator the imagined scene of the artist's penis entering the model's mouth is the ultimate goal of his quest and represents the apogee of his suffering. The narrator's experience in World War II belong essentially to the world of battle. His brush with death is depicted and his journey through Greece is a quest for the site of an ancient battle. As in the case of the uncle, the event which awaits the narrator is the destruction through the mouth. The death of a warrior through the mouth and its connection sexually thus links the two.

Penetration suggests the narrator's war-time experience and fellatio. The effect is to activate the ambiguity which informs subsequent appearances of these and related phrases.

At the level of a larger assimilative network the image of the mouth provides a link between separate destructive episodes, such as the love-making scene and the scene where the wife is pictured with her mouth open. At the level of more minute associative operations, the parts of the mouth are deployed as generators. At various moments within the text, examples from one or other of these assimilative networks may be seen to assert itself, to become especially potent as

generators of assimilation. The constant however is that component parts remain as part of the whole.

The mouth functions as the entry point for an agent of destruction is repeated in the context of battle. *La Bataille de Pharsale* is particularly strong in showing love-making and war-making as equivalent acts of physical aggression.³ The mouth helps in part to establish this.

The basis of the two human activities hinges around the mouth as the recipient of something foreign. Also the mouth is said to be like a wound, its description recalling that of the female genitals.

The theme of Pharsalus with blood and combat affects every relationship of the narrator of *La Bataille de Pharsale* and *Histoire* in its erotic connections. It evokes Corrine with her bloody leg after climbing a tree, the girl he deflowers and his wife's slow death.

On the theme of Introduction:

Intercourse, whether oral or not is conceived as an *introduction of a foreign object* like all *violent encounters* the introduction of a sharp instrument into the woman's vagina. The whole language is spun with a certain violence, which does not however into the realm of sadomasochism:

...cette éternelle blessure ruisselant déjà avant d'être forcée et si impudiquement offerte qu'elle semble attendre une acte d'une précision et d'une nudité sinon chirurgicale comme le

suggère l'idée de quelque chose qui *perce, pénètre, s'enfonce en crissant dans l'étroite chair, du moins presque médical* en sens qu'il (*l'acte en soi, physique, dénudé, débarrassé de son aspect passionnel*) relève évidemment du domaine physiologique ...[RF:180]

l'introduction d'un objet non seulement dur, mais capable de répandre, projeter avec violence hors de lui-même [RF:180]

...à moins donc qu'elle n'ait vu en lui qu'un *instrument* (pour ainsi dire *phallique* ou priapique comme ce comment s'appelle que les épouses japonaises attachent à leur talon pour, s'asseyant dessus dans une position inconmode particulière à la *science érotique* et légèrement acrobatique des Orientaux, s'en pour *fendre, introduisant en elles (et se remplissant de)* cet orgueilleux et invincible succédané de la virilité) un instrument commode de par sa dépendance servile et le facilités qu'elle avait de le joindre chaque fois qu'elle *désirait apaiser d'élémentaires besoins physiques ou peut-être de l'esprit* ...[RF:287]

In addition to the theme of introduction this shows Corrine to be sexually aware and willing to use Iglésia in a way which prefigures Georges' use of her.

Other examples of the phallus *forcing* or *being forced* are as follows:

l'introduisant [RF:248]

je m'enfonçais [RF:275]

m'enfonçant [RF:275]

poussant sans trêve [RF:275]

coups sourds [RF:276]

cognant [RF:276]

tous deux comme *un animal allant et venant cognant allant et venant violemment dans sa cage* [RF:276]

pénètre [BP:213]

'enfouçant' [BP:213]

membre enfoucé en elle [BP:215]

les saillir les clouer [HI:341]

l'enfouçant [HI:342]

main habile le guidait l'introduisait [HI:371]

poussant trouvant enfin s'enfouçant glissant [HI:371]

pèse encore plus fort [LC:140]

pousse la tête [LC:140]

nodosités froissent la chair humide qui se resserre sur elles, puis, brusquement, elle s'enfonce tout entière [LC:142-143]

l'enfonce complètement [LC:149]

s'enfonce profondément [LC:155]

A chaque poussée [LC:155]

poussée [LC:163]

[membre] enserre gauchement [LC:113]

Sexual intercourse is that of *force in general*:

pressant [son ventre] [RF:246]

nous nous serions l'un contre l'autre [RF:246]

[bouts] *comme les têtes des clous enfoués dans mes paumes* [RF:247]

[bouts] *l'écrasant de mon poids* [RF:247]

[reins] *où se nouaient ses pieds* [RF:248]

la heurtais [RF:248]

l'écrasais [RF:248]

la heurtant [RF:248]

m'agripper [BP:75]

collant avec emportement sa bouche à la sienne [LC:103]

violentes poussées [TR:56]

sous une poussée plus forte de son compagnon l'arrière de son crâne heurte les briques [TR:26]

soulèvent presque de briques [TR:56]

l'écrasant contre le mur dont sa tête heurte chaque fois les briques [TR:5]

d'un violent coup de reins la fille se dégage de l'étreint de l'homme [TR:66]

Je sais où il *la carambole* [TR:218]

...rose entre ses seins gras polis [...] luisants comme du marbre comme ces poitrines de statues striées de signatures de touristes graffiti maladroits tracés au moyen d'un *pointe dure* (couteau, clou) qui *dérape et glisse...* [HI:168]

The *knife and nail* correlation with the penis is forged further in its sexual associations, again indicating something that cuts and pierces the naked body.

Short Death/Escape

Coitus is represented as a short-death, a spasm where *time is momentarily escaped* and there is *union with the 'other' - 'woman'*. This is however *only momentary* and the terrible sense of *solitude invades immediately after*. It is totally *engulfing* and definitively conceived as solitary in the end - the partner remains eternally the 'other' - a style of coitus interruptus in its own right.

War acts a *founding stone* to show the *fabrication* of 'sexuality' and indeed the *solitariness of the erotic act*:

...il (Georges) ne fût pas en train de dialoguer sous la froide pluie saxonne avec un petit juif souffreteux [...] mais avec lui-même, c'est-à-dire son double, *tout seul* sous la pluie grise,

parmi les rails, les wagons de charbon ou peut-être les années plus tard, *toujours seul* (quoiqu'il fût maintenant couché à côté d'une tiède chair de femme ...[RF:176])

Georges discovers in the erotic union the death like union is ephemeral. Therefore pure love eventually means suffering as it claims to be quest for the impossible. In the end 'woman' becomes a separate entity, an alien being and her role as guide to the mysteries of life fails, if such a task has ever been plausible as Georges has remarked. In the end the narrator has to face the realities of love and the deceptions, whether infidelity or self-deception, but each causes incredible individual suffering.

'Sexuality' is a depersonalised , solitary and egoistic exercise for both partners as there is a lack of identification and a break-down of their 'normal' selves. Often the characters have no grasp or little grasp on their own selves.

...l'armoire éternellement vide des chambres d'hôtel [...] destinés à ne jamais rien renfermer sinon leur vide poussiéreux, poussiéreux cercueil des fantômes reflétés de milliers de corps nus, furieux et moitiés, de milliers d'étreintes emmagasinées, confondues dans les glauques profondeurs de la glace inaltérable, virginale et froide... [RF:40]

This again represents the eternity of the situation, the coldness and shallowness. This passage captures beautifully the solitariness inevitable in life and the sexual act.

The 'other' will inevitably emerge, despite the *illusion of togetherness* created intercourse:

première fois conscience de cette chose (mais comment dire : existence, vie, autre?)
extérieure à lui [HI:374]

je me rende compte qu'elle ne me voyait même plus qu'ils m'avaient quitte pour regarder guettant son plaisir [HI:370]

The isolation of each individual is clearly apparent in the descriptions of love-making. There is an absence of tenderness and sensitivity which turns an intimate act into a dual, where the gap between the two solitudes is never breached. What lies between people is the inability to know each other's mind, thus a certain solipsism emerges. The woman's body becomes a (partial) substitute for the inavailability or even absence of her thoughts. Total union is of course impossible, hence love spells suffering for. Ultimately eternal union would deny the discontinuous nature of man in the universe. 'Woman' becomes a symbol of the unfathomable mysteries of life.

...[instants de silence, lugubrement ponctué par les lointains et sporadiques meuglements de boeufs oubliés] et [pendule Louis XIV] se trouvent là pour imprimer avec insistance dans l'esprit du voyageur ou des amants clandestins cette furieuse et haletante angoisse du provisoire, du limité, conférant même au plaisir son caractère tragique - qui est d'avoir, bref ou long, une fin... [HE:91]

This indicates the brevity of the erotic union and how this is only a 'little death' of time, where union with the 'other' is possible. Also this points to transgression and the symbiotic relationship of pain and pleasure.

ivres croyant que c'était toujours, mais un instant seulement en réalité [RF:250]

Very important is the progressive erosion of time that appears can only be arrested in sexual climax and in death. In orgasm the screens of one's self consciousness are removed, there is a total loss of control - there are overriding forces and lovers are bound and blinded in a temporary unity. This is referred to by Simon as the 'little death' and restated by the de Chazal aphorism. The loss of control, escape from time, momentary union and utter solitude do indeed suggest a certain death.

seulement cette espèce de spasme, dur, comme une toux, que résonne en même temps dans leurs deux corps [RF:91]

...comme si notre vie tout entière *s'était précipitée* [...] *s'arrachant, s'extirpant de nous de moi de ma solitude se libérant s'élançant* [...] ivres croyant que c'était toujours, *mais un instant seulement en réalité* comme quand on rêve que l'on croit qu'il se passe des tas de choses et quand on rouvre les yeux l'aiguille a à peine changé de place... [RF:250]

Simon associates the paroxysm that terminates every embrace with the last spasm of death : the two ultimate experiences of the human body. Indeed fear of dying makes one catch one breath as if in orgasm and the personality dies. The loosing of the sexual urge is not always as violent but it is representative not final in Simon's novels. The demolished barriers are not the same as death but just as violence irrevocably overturns the balance of life, so temporarily and partially does sexual violence. Inevitably linked to the moment of climax there is a minor rupture suggestive of death.

Coitus and the post-coital experience culminate and proliferate to be described in death-terms:

nous gisions comme deux morts [RF:248]

morts [RF:250]

les deux tombés inanimés [RF:276]

comme morte [TR:66]

comme mort lui aussi [TR:66]

Engulfing/Intoxicating/Smothering

The sexual act is described as a *totally engulfing act, in which one become totally submerged and one's former self is replaced with the loss of inhibitions. One becomes intoxicated:*⁴

l'engloutissant [RF:248]

m'engloutissant [RF:275]

l'enfouissant [RF:248]

j'enfouis [RF:255]

m'enfouissant [RF:243]

bouche à moitié étouffée [RF:275]

sa gorge étouffée [RF:275]

fondant [RF:276]

m'y fondre y disparaître m'y engloutir [RF:243]

s'étouffait [BP:176]

comme si elle suffoquait [BP:213]

s'étouffait [BP:213]

l'étouffe [BP:224]

m'ensevelirait [HI:169]

m'étoufferait sous la masse molle informe et insexuée de sa poitrine maternelle [HI:169]

à demi étouffe [LC:140]

l'étouffe sous sa bouche [LC:103]

enfoui [LC:140]

chevelure détrempée pendant comme celle d'une *noyée* grands ouverts sur le noir, elle semble *insensible au monde extérieur* [TR:56]

Here the woman is perceived as drowned and intoxicated in the sexual act.

Feverish/Hurried

Intercourse is conceived as *feverish*, as one *loses* one's control and *order* is disrupted and this is a reminder of one's mortality:

...pour rappeler qu'à tout instant le *monde ordonné et rassurant peut soudain chavirer, se retourner et se mettre sur le dos comme une vieille putain troussant ses jupes et, retournant au chaos originel, en dévoiler la face cachée pour montrer que son envers n'est qu'un simple entassement d'ordures et de détruits* ...[HI:66-67]

This indicates the universe as not ordered except as cyclical. Noticibly a particularly non-sexual woman is used to illustrate this as opposed to those of the perhaps suggesting the disorder in 'sexuality' particularly when it is absent or has disappeared from a 'woman'.

Others are:

tremblais [RF:247]

tremblant [RF:248]

fébrile [RF:247]

tâtonnant [RF:247]

retombais [RF:248]

vêtements, comme ceux d'un *amant impatient, hâtivement fiévreusement arrachés, rejetés, éparpillés* [RF:83] *trop pressé* [RF:248]

tressautant à toute vitesse frénétiquement comique angoissant la femme toujours en dessous
[BP:159]

impatients maladroits tremblants d'allégresse [HI:383]

[doigts] *fébriles* [LC:102]

[doigts] *se resserrent* [LC:113]

[doigts] *crispent convulsivement* [LC:113]

[main] *allant et venant avec une frénésie maladroite* [LC:113]

mouvement de va-et-vient des fesses de l'homme se fait de plus en plus rapide et d'une amplitude plus grande [TR:20]

[mouvements] *s'accélèrent* [LC:113]

déboutonner fiévreusement le col [HE:240]

The sexual act is carried out in hurried terms, whether prior to or during the sexual act, particularly when guilt and transgression is involved.

Breathing quickens as the sexual moment heightens in intensity:

respirant très fort [RF:248]

respirant de plus en plus vite [RF:248]

respirant peu à peu fort [BP:48]

respiration se fait plus rapide [BP:213]

respiration s'accélérer [BP:224]

halète de plus en plus bruyamment [LC:113]

respiration rapide [LC:29]

The strolling woman is aware of the man behind her and his breathing is similar to that during representations of coitus.

Verbs, substantives and nouns are used to describe the *gasping and exclamations of pain involved, establishing a symbiosis between pain and pleasure, life and death*:

souffle coupé [RF:248]

râlant [RF:275]

râle [RF:275]

cri [RF:275]

bruit étranglé [BP:213]

houle furieuse [RF:181]

bruit étranglé [BP:215]

mots entrecoupés [BP:176]

souffles haletants et mêlés de couple enlacé [TR:26]

long chuintement [LC:140]

long soupir [LC:143]

gémissement [LC:150]

long soupir [LC:143]

elle renverse la tête dans un gémissement [LC:103]

haletait [RF:248]

gémissait [RF:248]

gémissant [RF:248]

gémissant [RF:275]

criant de joie s'abattant s'ébattant [HI:124]

crier [BP:177]

elle halète [LC:100]

étouffe une exclamation de douleur [LC:113]

The girl is shown to have been awkward in masturbating the man's penis, thus heightening the ambiguity of pain and pleasure within the sexual act as the man lets out this exclamation.

Orgastic language is employed:

Aaah aaaaaaaah [RF:275]

Ahahahah [BP:215]

Both man and woman enjoy coitus but it is necessarily viewed more from the male's perspective and enjoyment with a male narrator. However the existence of pleasure is constantly placed in doubt with words of gasping, sobbing, pain and death.

Disruption of Balance

Coitus is represented as a tumultuous experience and a drain and return of the life-force, where *fluids and blood figure* strongly. This is associated with the *plethora of the organs* which causes the *rush of blood on whose balance life depends*. With the emission of sexual fluid in orgasm it is as if the two bodies and minds follow the same route outward, emptying into the other and destroying all boundaries, but the agony is intense when the barriers assert themselves again.

Coitus:

rebondissait vers moi [RF:248]
désarmée [RF:248]
tempêtant [RF:250]
[cœur] battant encore vite [RF:255]
[vie] s'arrachant [RF:250]
[vie] s'extirpant [RF:250]
solitude se libérant [RF:250]
nous inondant l'un l'autre [RF:250]
se précipitant [RF:250]
éclatant [RF:276]
inondant [RF:276]
notre vie toute entière s'était précipitée [RF:250]
coeurs seuls continuant de battre très vite fous [HI:370]
tumulte du sang [BP:224]
tumulte de leur sang [BP:224]
afflux précipité du sang [LC:107]
saccades précipitées qui seccouent le bassin [LC:163]
essayant sans y parvenir de reprendre notre souffle [RF:249]

Post-coitus:

vidés tout entiers [RF:250]
solitude frustrée [RF:250]
de nouveau emprisonnée [RF:250]
assourdis par le vacarme de notre sang se ruant refluant en grondant dan nos membres [RF:250]
heurtant avec fureur les parois les étroites et indépassables limites [RF:250]

immobilisés [BP:24]

peu à peu je commençai à *voir de nouveau* [RF:276]

The sensual delight is frozen that the individual has abandoned himself to. Like most of the narrator's Georges discovers that erotic union is not infinite. After coitus the walls of solitude reappear. The empty wardrobe in *La Route des Flandres* becomes a symbol for lovers who fail to fulfill their sexual aspirations.

Struggle/Submission

'Sexuality' is described in terms of *struggle and submission*:

mouvants de couple luttant comme au milieu d'un ring [TR:44]

Associations are made with the circus through the representation on a poster and thus the sexual act is again represented as grotesquely commical - something like the aphorism of Martin Luther in *La Route des Flandres*.

ce que l'on pourrait appeler non pas des *étreintes* mais plutôt, *en termes de boxes, des accrophages* [TR:105]

...[gravure] représente l'intérieur d'une *grange* où une servante est renversée en arrière sur le *foin* [...] bras tendu devant elle, elle *essaye de repousser sans grande conviction* un valet de ferme qui *s'apprête à la pénétrer*. [...] *luttant* avec elle pour la coucher complètement, sa *position évoque celle d'un lutteur en plein effort* ou de *Sisyphé* arc-bouté contre son rocher. Dans l'encadrement d'une lucarne au-dessus du couple, on peut voir les têtes de deux gamins

rieurs qui *contemplant le spectacle*. Dans leur lutte les deux personnages ont renversé une jarre de lait... [TR:42-43]

The above shows the correlation of struggling, wrestling and coitus. Additionally through the myth of Sisyphus the eternal situation is stressed. This is shown in comic relief in a sense, for it is like a laughable spectacle. The barn and hay as a background is stressed. Note also the milk in the barn. The notion of spying and the gaze is strong in this text, for such a scene occurs on film reel, which is often established as limited, such as through holes and so forth.⁵ This extract is taken from a representation of an engraving, but the 'gaze' is always there and visual images/mediums serve to heighten this motif in the text. One can see the close associative network and the fluid movement into different frames take place even in such a short extraction.

...[affiche] sont enlacés [...] silhouettes des combattants, deux personnages, un homme et une femme [...] Au premier plan et sur la gauche se trouve le visage d'une jeune femme coiffée d'un voile de mariée. Ses yeux noyés, ses sourcils froncés, le dessin de sa bouche entrouverte, expriment le désespoir [...] tout près du visage féminin est représenté celui d'un jeune homme aux cheveux blonds et frisés qui surmontent une tête de mouton. Il regarde la jeune mariée d'un air ennuyé et coupable. Il n'existe pas de continuité entre les divers éléments de l'affiche ...[TR:95-96]

This is also indicative of the way language works, and episodes merge but do remain distinct as said above.

quelque chose de nos *ancêtres sauvages primitifs sombres s'étreignant s'accouplant roulant nus violents et brefs* [RF:260]

The narrator brings out the scabrous side of 'sexuality' by juxtaposing what is usually distinct. Everywhere the violent side comes out and in humour too as the lover crushes his fingers in *La Bataille de Pharsale* in a jealous rage. This also indicates the primal side and fundamental nature of 'sexuality'.

Language emerges as an aggressive force

Language represents aggression or is employed to show the aggressive tendencies of the sexual act:

In *La Route des Flandres* there is a detailed account of two passionate affairs and in both there are minimal emotional links. The physical and passionate sides are presented. Lust rather than love predominates and the whole accounts are quite depersonalized. The love-making between Corrine and Iglésia is fast and frantic and contains no conversation - both seek to fulfil their physical needs.

This same preoccupation in the affair of Georges and Corrine is exhibited with physical union occurring at the expense of emotional contact. An inability to communicate illustrates that no real communication is possible between men and women, illustrated in the violence which emerges as Georges tries to show Corrine he loves her and additionally in his failure to understand her objections.

The conversation that does take place between Georges and Corrine may indicate her need to be loved as opposed to that of Georges, but when one considers her actions elsewhere such a theory does not ring true. Corrine reacts against the image that has been drawn around her or 'woman' and rejects unconvincingly the notion of herself as an 'unreal object'. Corrine reacts also by hitting Georges in frustration.

The way Georges perceives Corrine when they make love is still the same as beforehand and herein is a tragedy. He has treated her like a soldier's girl according to her and she is quite right. Only her objection is not worked through and she walks out, at which point her body as a 'route' is left behind as Georges realizes that her body was never an answer, only a 'route' to travel. Georges learns nothing and finds her objection scarcely convincing - it certainly does

not alter him. As women learn they are bodies for men, men learn they are bodies for death in war. This demonstrates Simon's ability to fantasize gender-related frustrations on both sides.

Georges can only respond with aggressive love-making, which corresponds to the earlier images of the penis as a weapon. Georges exerts his force and love is reduced to a battle. Experiencing the power and savage brutality of his own sexuality, Georges quite literally battles with Corrine in order to convince her of his love. The sexual encounter looses all inhibitions. Georges makes love to Corrine, but his mind is elsewhere, she is a catalyst and a medium upon which to live out his pent-up frustrations - she becomes a battle-ground. The entire language becomes forceful and has aggressive overtones. The trauma in the mind of Georges precludes any possibility of an emotional tie, thus the language employed as a struggle is apt. Corrine can understand that she has been used by Georges to satisfy desire and that she represents very little to him. His failure to see her as anything more than a body is interlinked with his failure to discover any truth about her. Georges engages in violent sexual activity with Corrine to convince her of his love and devotion and there is an idea of him forcing her to submit, that appears more in *Leçon de Choses* and *Tripyque* where the sexual act becomes reminiscent of wrestlers.

...Je dis Est-ce que je t'aime? *je la heurtai le cri heurtant sa gorge étranglé* [...] non [...] je dis de nouveau Tu ne crois pas que je t'aime, *la heurtant la frappant de nouveau* [...] *sa gorge s'étranglant* [...] *ne lui laissant pas le temps la force de répondre* [...] *sa tête roulant furieusement* [...] ils avaient *enfermé un fou dans la porcherie*... [RF:248-249]

...Mais il lui *attrapa* le poignet avant qu'elle lui atteint *attrapant* au vol l'autre main [...] un moment ils *luttèrent* [...] sentant son poids le poids de toute cette chair de femme sa hanche *écrasant* sa jambe ...[RF:90]

essayait toujours de se dégager [RF:260]

...Vous *me faites mal*, disant : *Lâchez-moi* vous me [...] il se rendit compte que sa main maintenant *de toutes ses forces* [...] répétant d'une voix monotone, mécanique, effrayée : *je vous en prie* [RF:225]

The *conversations between lovers in the texts are minimal and very much on one level throughout, that is non-achieving and based in violence:*⁶

...[chambre à coucher] les personnages *se portent des coups perfides s'assassinant par les l'invisible moyen des paroles* [...] l'héroïne en robe mayve *s'effondrant soudain sur le canape une main sur le coeur contenant le sang d'une invisible blessure* ...[BP:168]

Melodrama is described but often language works in this abstract way where things are said under the surface. This shows language to be a battle zone of its own.

Elle dit *rageusement Non je n'ai pas voulu!* pour qui me pre. Les *sanglots l'étouffent*. Il lui tapote gauchement [...] répétant *allons voyons voyons* [LC:168]

The text then proceeds to the sobbing emitted by the ammunition server, who is indeed in a tenuous situation. The two situations are associated, yet remain distinct.⁷

...[elle] *serre convulsivement* contre lui [...] Elle dit mon chéri [...] dites moi que vous m'aimez [...] Il dit mais voyons je [...] Attention ma chérie *vous allez me tachez*. Elle dit vous t... [...] Elle *crie* espèce de. Elle tourne *brusquement* le dos et part en courant. Il crie Voyons [...] Il crie Estelle écoutez-moi! Estelle, Elodie, Emilie, Elisabeth, Hélène, Sylvie, Gilberte, Edith, Odette. Il fait quelques pas dans la direction-où elle *s'est enfuie*. [...] L'allumette lui brûle les doigts. Il la laisse tomber et elle s'éteint dans l'herbe. Tout est complètement noir... [LC:172-173]

This implies the indifference on the man's part whose only motivation was fulfilment of desire. This is marked by the darkness at the end of the text, which marks the end of the sexual pursuit or rather once that is finished only darkness is left - similar to Corrine walking out in *La Route des Flandres*. The use of the numerous names, indicates the indifference the man has to what woman he been with, for passion is non-discriminatory.

Peu à peu la jeune femme *cesse d'opposer une résistance et d'elle-même* maintenant remue la main qui *enserre gauchement* le membre gonflé [LC:113]

Putting herself forward is part of the feminine attitude so established but often this is followed by a feigned denial. The feminine attitude is made up of complementary opposites.

There is a notion denial of want and then submission, but never is there any idea of out and out rape, except of course perhaps in *L'Herbe* through displaced language when the doctor attending Marie suggests that Louise should sell her favours to pay off her husbands debts. Rape is not a large factor as even in representations of innocent girls who are evasive and fight against the sexual force they are shown to eventually submit to the sexual force.

Elle fait *shshshshshsh* [LC:98]

It is not difficult to extract various other examples of the notion of force. Everything is tainted with the notion of transgression and intercourse is described like all other acts and objects in the text, an - everyday occurrence so to speak.

In this case the woman is looking after a child and has sneaked out claiming she has come merely to tell the man that she does not want to see him. This image is mingled with the walking party where a man makes advances to a woman and she denies him. There is no coitus in the latter but suggestions are made. These could well be distinctive episodes, but generative associations and similarity of language would seem to suggest they are related. The language is not dissimilar and the anonymity of the couples are stressed, which adds to this effect.

Struggle/Submission:

The male forcefully prevents the woman's escape:

lui barrant le passage [LC:75]

il embrasse *maladroïtement* ses doigts [LC:100]

saisit son mince poignet qu'il *abaisse* [LC:109]

sa main a un *mouvement de recul* mais il *la maintient de force et l'oblige à se refermer* [LC:109]

Il *resserre* encore l'*étreinte* [LC:103]

il la repousse violemment [TR:106]

A disparate picture is painted, as the couple have made love and then he brutally shoves her away. They are in the mud and rain and he has no further use of her.

The woman struggles with the male:

le repousse [LC:97]

Elle *repousse* sa main [LC:100]

[voile transparente] contre lequel elle *lutte* (ou avec lequel elle *joue*) [LC:97]

le repousse [LC:100]

elle *se raidit et essaye de se dégager* [LC:103]

me repoussant [HI:370]

(Refer to the actions of the rabbit described.)

déséquilibre par ses violents mouvements, le corps de l'homme titube et l'un de ses pieds écrase la fleur [TR:53]

The groom on his wedding-night makes love to the bar-girl in an intoxicated state. He uses brutal movements to ward her off later and these are like those of the sexual act and of course reminiscent of Sabine and Pierre in *L'Herbe* who struggle to their feet under their weight, where she is somewhat intoxicated. This equates struggling with the sexual act inter textually.⁸

The woman utters objections and begs release:

Elle dit Non je [LC:140]

je ne veux pas [LC:149]

répète violemment non je ne veux pas pas comme ça [LC:149]

Je vous en prie non [LC:52]

je vous en prie je vous en supplie [LC:75]

laissez-moi je vous défends [LC:97]

répétant non ça [LC:97]

non je vous en prie laiss [LC:97]

The woman submits:

Peu à peu la jeune femme relâche ses muscles [LC:103]

The woman becomes dispossessed of her being and loses her modesty . She exposes herself to the violence of 'sexuality' unleashed in her sexual organs and opens herself to the impersonal frenzy which overwhelms her. She yields to masculine violence and is sucked with her companion in to the power of 'sexuality' where she experiences a total lack of control. The close

relationship between pain and pleasure and the transgression of the taboo. (Refer to the rabbit sections of the animal and abstract orders.)

Pain and pleasure mingle in sexual excitement and subsequently the act:

expression d'effroi et d'excitation mêlés [LC:75]

cri étouffe [LC:149]

mord dans l'étouffe [...] pour étouffer les cris [LC:155]

rit nerveusement [LC:53]

rire crispé [LC:100]

coeur bat violemment [LC:53]

The language of struggle, weakness and submission is used to describe part of the sexual act:

[mouvements] faibles et lents [LC:113]

fesses nerveuses ont de faible soubresauts [LC:142-143]

[épaules] sécoués de tressaillements nerveux [LC:163]

remue un moment sous l'étouffe [LC:101]

groupe noir et confus que forment l'homme et la jeune femme n'est animé que de faibles mouvements [LC:101-102]

The woman's movements are similar to those of the rabbit and this parallel links desire or unfulfilled desire with death.

Other language of this school is:

m'eloignant [RF:248]

hurlant sans fins sans but dans les ténèbres [RF:249]

s'étreignant [RF:260]

s'accouplant [RF:260]

roulant [RF:260]

se démenant avec des mouvements saccadés heurtés [BP:21]

frottent [BP:213]

s'affale sur elle [BP:213]

serre violemment, l'emprisonne [BP:216]

lèvres gonflées meurtries [RF:275]

buté [RF:250]

furieux [RF:250]

position fatigante [TR:86]

When 'woman' is represented as neither weak and submissive sexually or old, she is represented as somewhat of a nymphomaniac:

...comment les baiser d'une bouche aussi large que la mienne monstrueuse avec ses dents difformes rocheuses et puis enfin comment une femme même en feu jusqu'au bout des ongles pourrait-elle accueillir un membre aussi énorme et elle pendant ce tempos multipliait les mots tendres ses furieux baisers ses doux gémissements ses yeux me mordaient. Je te tiens me dit-elle dans un paroxysme je tiens mon petit pigeon mon passereau et alors combien mes imaginations avaient été fausses et mes craintes stupides elle me le prouva car m'embrassant plus étroitement encore c'est tout entier oui tout entier qu'elle me reçut et même chaque fois que pour la ménager je me retirais elle se rapprochait avec frénésie et saisissant ma pine à pleines mains elle l'enfonçait dans une étreinte encore plus profonde [...] j'aurais même pu croire que pour la faire jouir complètement il me manquait encore quelque chose ah! que la mère du Minotaure et son mugissant amante... [BP:92-93]

This extends again the notion of bestiality and places the emphasis on the phallus. Noticably here the bird imagery is transferred so the male is the delicate and vulnerable and this reversal is inherent in the text. It seems the vulnerable sexual partner is described in delicately bird-like terms.

Language in *L'Herbe*:

The representation of 'sexuality' in *L'Herbe* is not centred so directly in coitus, unlike the other texts, but emerges as a displaced and tragic 'sexuality'.

The language is drawn from the same well, with not as much attention devoted directly to men's and women's sexual parts, indicating less fascination but more reflection on the impending effects of lost and foregone 'sexuality'. There emerges a description of the phallus and its importance but this is not so based in physical description of the phallus itself. In *L'Herbe* the emphasis is more on a displaced sexuality and woman defining their sexual roles which will emerge as dependent on the 'other's look', the solitariness and basic urge of sex, its role in reproduction and its role in defining man.

The reflections emerge from the central scene of Louise lying in the **grass** with her lover and everything follows from this. Like the other narrators there is much assumption on her part and additionally the novel works by associations, sensual movement and fabrication on her part. The impact of 'sexuality' is described in regard to women's lives and Louise is the only female narrator in Simon's texts.

Louise is childless and is at a crucial point in deciding whether to leave her husband and family and go with her lover. She lies in the **grass** and contemplates in monologue with her lover but essentially he remains anonymous, in the way Corrine is a voicing pit for Georges. Louise

remains unemotional in her account. Her life changes as imperceptibly as the growing of the **grass**, set forth in the aphorism at the beginning of the text.

The narrator is clearly a surrogate of the author, as he slips in and out of the protagonist's consciousness, a voice both witness and memory. The 'she' is usually a disguised 'I' and the narrative voice presents her in the third person but mostly its presented as she describes herself. Simon creates a fully rounded and accurately situated woman character.

Marie consciously renounces marriage and 'sexuality' to serve her brother, thus anticipating Louise's renuciation to leave with her lover - symbolised by Louise lying in the **grass** at the end in a similar position to the dying Marie. Louise may not fulfil her sexual need but retains something of a higher order as she makes the discovery of the nature of time and acceptance of this through Marie. Louise moves from erotic gratification to the symbolic and spiritual fulfillment, whereby she seemingly conforms to patriarchal order but in fact identifies with Marie's silent victory over time. Her decision indicates a loss of illustions, not that she is happier and Louise rises to a level beyond sexuality. She does not submit to the male order as do the other women in the novels. Thus perhaps she is the more admirable character. Her vision in the end is ordered more so than any other character.

Sexuality' in *L'Herbe* demands an attention of its own

Louise's struggle shows the solitude in the sexual act

...prendre conscience des mains sure elle - elle dit : << *Non, laisse-moi*>>, la voix à la fois dure, morne, absente [...] Louise *frappant rageusement du poing dans ses paumes* [...] disant dans le noir avec une sorte de véhémence, d'impuissant, désespoir : <<Il m'avait promis que nous partirons d'ici ...[HE:15]

Louise is lying in the **grass** with her lover, and pushes him away. The impending solitary side of the sexual act is shown with slight variations and this is not worked through as much as in the other texts, directly pertaining to coitus.

Louise's struggle is indicative of her frustration:

S'écartant, le repoussant, se détachant [HE128]

Louise is enraged by her situation and wants to leave with her lover but knows from start to finish as does he that they will not depart together and she will remain to keep the old order and hold the family together. Here Louise obviously pushes her lover away from a sexual perspective but she also does so symbolically. This also heightens the solitary aspect of 'sexuality'.

Louises's struggle is described in embryo of that which is more physical in the later texts:

lui attrapant brutalement les poignets, les réunissant, les immobilisant [HE:239]

essayant de se dégager, de s'échapper [HE:239]

lui atrapant, réunissant de nouveau les poignets [HE:239]

Tu me fais mal, je t'en prie [HE:239]

At times the struggle between Pierre and Sabine, which is non-sexual physically becomes correlated with that between Louise and her lover in Louise's mind as her mind moves freely between the two. Language becomes a battlefield, but the physical struggle and the sexual act again become correlates of one another. Language shows the desperate seeking of the attention of the 'other'.

Parallels are made between coition and dialogue:

Louise pouvant, lui semblait-il, les voir, *haletants, luttant* dans l'odeur fade, écoeurante, de l'alcool répandu [...] les *deux corps emmêlés n'en formaient qu'un* [HE:239-240]

This parallel is developed further in *L'Herbe* than the above discussion on it in *La Route des Flandres*. The above is reminiscent of the creatures, described with two bodies and one head, thus calling up the sexual act, not just through the wrestling motif. Language often takes on the form of an offensive sexual assault which both fascinates and horrifies Louise - the characters' bodies confront each other through language. Pierre is more often than not silent and just as Sabine can not control her own 'sexuality' she can not control her language. She needs to be noticed and seeks the approval or attention of the 'other' to her being, and not even to her questions.

This failure to communicate on the level of language signifies her and Louise's failure of 'sexuality' with their husbands. There is on Sabine's part a constant desire for fusion. Louise's own words seem to her to be an exchange of blows with her husband, accompanied by an expectation of physical violence. Marie has led an insular life and her words are unemotional, thus she suffers not from words or 'sexuality'. This fascinates and makes Louise admire Marie as opposed to the comic figure of Sabine. Marie has abstained from the intensity of human experience. Gradually Louise becomes engulfed by this figure as she uses the same language in the end to describe herself as she uses to describe the dying figure.

Language can become a correlative of rape:

If one looks closely at *L'Herbe*, pages 85-88, one understands the doctor to insinuate indirectly to Louise that she may sell him her favours in order to repay her husband's gambling debts. Louise remains collected until he leaves, but then she leaves and breaks a vase in anger, which is uterine shaped, thus by association representing the forceful violation of a woman's sex. Simon establishes a humorous situation as Louise suggests she should see a doctor because of the subsequent bleeding finger and she laughs. The implication is there of prostitution.

Sexuality is indicative of pain and suffering:

...comme si la virginité était moins une affaire de sexes, de la chair déchirée, violente, qu'une disposition, ou plutôt une préservation de l'esprit, ou plutôt une exemption, non du plaisir mais de la souffrance... [HE:69]

... Entreprendre tranquillement de réparer (avec cette froide et minutieuse attention qui est sans doute l'héritage de siècles d'expérience - non pas l'expérience des fards de la toilette, mais de l'homme) les dégâts faits dans un maquillage par le semblait-il intarissable flot de larmes qui coulait l'instant devant, ce à quoi Sabine était selon toute probabilité en train de s'occuper...[HE:179]

These represent the pain and pleasure symbiosis in 'sexuality'. Marie's character is perceived by Louise as exempt of pain or pleasure, radically whole, isolated and invulnerable due to an enforced celibacy and resigning herself to the true nature of time.

...je n'étais même pas encore ta femme mais je me refusais à le croire, à admettre une chose aussi dégoûtante, penser que c'était cela qui m'attendait, avec ma meilleure amie, avec

n'importe qui avec des grues, des putains, avec toutes ces soi-disant étudiantes, je ne savais rien de ces choses alors, je ne savais pas quelle fourberie, quelle duplicité un homme et une femme peuvent déployer... [HE:199]

Infidelity is a common link between every instance of marriage represented in these novels. Sabine's imaginings of her husbands infidelities, real or imagined are all the more comical because of his grotesqueness and lack of agility. The tragicomical figure of Sabine figures often as she can not reconcile herself to old age and death and this adds to her husbands suffering.

...femme qui, elle, refuse de considérer comme vieille, continue ou plutôt s'obstine, s'acharne, se cramponne à cette impossible maintenance, avec sa robe trop voyante, ses ongles sanglants, son visage peinturluré, pareil, sous les fards violents, à celui de l'idée de plaisir ou de volupté mais celle de quelque culte à la fois primitif et barbare...[HE:175]

Sabine's 'sexuality' however becomes replaced with synthetic beauty, as her greatest enemy is time and certainly causes havoc on her body. She blames her husband for infidelities, real or imagined and takes to the bottle to attain other stimulation and satisfaction. The very shape of the bottle she sucks indicates a displaced 'sexuality' as it is moulded into the shape of a voluptuous female form.

[Sabine] << Je déteste la mort, l'idée de la mort, je ne peux pas supporter>> [HE:129]

Louise is aware of Sabine's state and the opposite poles between her and Marie. Sabine is scared of death and the death of her 'sexuality'.

créature du même sexe qu'elle et pourtant, en quelque asexuée (pense-t-elle sans doute, avec comme une sorte de commisération apitoyée, de mépris, et - qui sait - d'envie [HE:50]

pensant au corps intact ignorant, blanc, aussi ignorant qu'à sa naissance [HE:59]

Sabine is contemptuous of Marie who has never been married or borne children but the latter dies with dignity. Marie is fantasized as a third sex, sexless. To Sabine she is the negation of

femininity and envied because time has no hold on her. Hence she is mocking of her non-femininity, unnaturalness and lack of sexual experience but she is also supremely jealous.

Quatre fois vingt ans quatre fois l'âge de l'amour et sans amour [HE:64]

Louise reflects on Marie through Sabine thus confirming the notion that love is defined by the age of highest beauty. Interestingly this is a woman's perspective.

... elle, a non seulement enfanté, conçu, soupiré sous les poids, les assauts, les furieux coups de boutoir de l'homme, mais encoure combien de fois gēmi forniqué en esprit et avec quelle sorte d'affreux, de torturant, d'intolérable plaisir, son imagination jalouse et exacerbée supposant, forgeant qui sait quelles sortes de perversions abomination et de mensonges) par l'intermédiaire de ces innombrables conquêtes (vraies ou imaginaires) qu'elle attribuait à celui auprès duquel elle avait passé sa vie [...] Louise cherchant maintenant sans y parvenir à raccorder les deux images ...[HE257-258]

The tragedy of life it seems with Simon is not that it itself is tragic but that people do not accept their place in the cyclical world. Their hopes of order create disorder.

COITUS INTERRUPTUS

Coitus Interruptus figures strongly, to show the *disruption at the heart of existence* and the *transgression and eternal nature* of the sexual act. It afflicts the characters with a *powerlessness to feel pleasure* and this comes from a series of objects, taboos and an awareness of a *cosmological connivance* which operates on universal and individual levels. The sexual act never produces a feeling of fullness but on the contrary leads most clearly to frustration. 'Sexuality' very rarely reaches fullness or satisfaction, either through direct objects, external objects, interruption or indeed as when Georges in La Route des Flandres Georges catches a

vision in the mirror which corresponds to the emptiness of the sexual act. The act of sex is part of a basic urge and *interruption halts the vital flow with a brutal sensation of being cut off.*

The *background of intercourse is described as oppressive:*

chant assourdissant des grenouilles [LC:94]

Fear and desire exist in symbiosis:)

...quelque chose dans le style d'une de ces gravures intitulées *l'Amant Surpris* ou *la Fille Séduite* [...] le valet accouru au bruit de coup de feu *se précipitant, habillé à la diable*, son ample chemise pendant à demi hors de sa culotte enfournée au saut du lit, et peut-être, derrière lui, une servante à bonnet de nuit, et presque nue, une main devant la bouche pour *étouffer un cri* et l'autre retenant maladroitement le vêtement qui glissant de son épaule découvre un sein [...] l'ombre floue des os enveloppée par le rose transparent de la chair) [...] les parties dans dans l'ombre étant la lèvre inférieure, l'arête du nez, le haut des joues, la paupière supérieure et le front au-dessus des sourcils ...[RF:81]

frémissante de peur de désir inassouvi elle avait à peine eu le temps de se rajuster dans *l'écurie* [RF:295]

There is a terror of being caught and an emphasis on danger, fear and sin. At times this serves to intensify the sexual act, leading against one's own fear a kind of struggle.

The eternity of the sexual act and coitus interruptus are related:

...l'éruption d'un volcan, la pluie de feu, et où les cadavres des couples enlacés *subsistent intacts, momifiés ardents, insoucieux*, juvéniles et priapiques dans un désordre de trépiads... [HI:110]

This Indicates the *eternal* and the *disorder* inherent in the sexual act. Coitus and agony are such a pair that the narrator in *Histoire* evokes the lovers submerged at the moment of orgasm in flames. After the turmoil of earthquake the erotic pose endures suggesting the timelessness and the dream of each couple to retain the moment of orgasm, to survive it and to escape linear time through orgasm. The two ultimate experiences of the human body *coitus and agony* are so closely related that it is not surprising the two lovers at Herculaneum in *Histoire*, who were engulfed during copulation, remain petrified for all eternity in postures of eternal embrace.

...maintenant il s'élance et presque aussitôt il reçoit *dans la bouche un coup de glaive dont la pointe ressort par la nuque* non pas la mort mais le sentiment de ta mort {his italics from non to mort} je ne savais pas encore... [BP:120]

Fratricide through the *oral motif* is combined into the sexual act and combines to include the eternal aspect. Also in *La Bataille de Pharsale* the orgasm is associated directly with the act of homicide as the woman writhes in ecstasy under her lover and the Roman legionary falls under the spear-thrust of his adversary and they blend into one.

immobilisé soudain dans la posture encore à *demi enfoncé* [BP:57]

moiteur perlant [BP:38]

tous les deux *immobiles pétrifiés se retenant de respirer* [BP:38]

couple d'amants surpris groupe sculpté dans la *pierre* [BP:24]

Les deux corps restent ainsi, comme changé en *pierre* [BP:216]

Sur les deux corps nus et figes la *sueur commence à se refroidir, les glaçant* [BP:224]

lui et elle gisants étendus *raides* ou plutôt *froides* sur le lit [HI:355]

...S'asseyant peu à peu sur moi *bondissant tressautant rapidement agitant* de doux mouvements
 ma pine *enfoncée en elle* moi *étendu rigide mort* pouvant me voir sous la forme de ce guerrier
 ou chasseur *ithyphallique de la préhistoire réduit à quelques traits charbonneux [...]*
retrouverait des siècles plus tard... [HI:125-126]

The narrator's body comes so close to an erotic death experience that he imagines himself as a dead warrior or hunter from prehistoric times. Ultimately death becomes the prevailing goal of love in Simon's fiction. A simulated sensation of death at the apex of love-making is desirable for an escape from discontinuity.

pensant à tous les corps d'homme et de femme *accolés haletants* [HI:370]

External objects come to represent coitus interruptus abstrusely:

bracelet *s'enfonçant* dans ma peau [BP:75]

bois de la barrière *coupe douloureusement* [LC:97]

barrière lui *coupant le dos* [LC:101]

barrière lui *coupe de dos [...]* Elle *ne sent pas la* elle peut sentir la *brûlure* à son doigt où la
douleur afflue [LC:42]

brûlure a son doigt [LC:107]

The woman cuts her finger as she leaves the house, to meet her lover and she is reminded of this throughout her meeting. She does not notice the pain while copulating. Passion is all embracing and everything else is forgotten at height of the sexual experience just as the imposing sound of the frogs does not appear to disturb the woman until the sexual act is complete.

The builder also accidentally cuts his finger and both are described as sucking their fingers and thus descriptions of fellation emerge as the finger also is equated through imagery of the fish and the penis. This may seem crude but the text goes beyond crudeness as it is descriptive and associated through language rather than smutily surveyed and described.

An awareness of transgression is present which heightens the sexual desire:

...[odalisque] première fois que je voyais une femme aussi nue) m'emplit alors d'un *trouble* qu'exprime assez bien le mot libidineux avec sa consonance un peu rose, un peu molle, plissée pour ainsi dire par la répétition des mêmes syllabes et de sons évocateurs (lit, bite, noeud), émotion rose et caoutchouteuse que je devais retrouver plus tard à la vue de ces poupées [...] (ce même trouble, ce même émoi un *peu honteux, tant par la conscience d'un interdit transgressé* [...] de catcheurs appareillés dans des accouplements vaguement obscènes ...[BP:138-139]

...me rendant compte à présent que cette *violente attraction* qu'elle exerçait sur moi avait ce même *goût* cette sorte d'amer parfum de *défendu de clinquant et de pauvre* que je respirais enfant [...] *s'identifier à la notion de culpabilité de désastre...* [BP:50]

Even in such an indirect way such notions of transgression will be a form of coitus interruptus and they will impinge on even the most intimate situation. Even at the time of violent attraction, there is transgression.

One's origins define one's 'sexuality' and presents itself as a form of transgression:

respect et d'amour pour son adorable mère et qui l'aurait surprise *sur le dos les jambes en l'air dans l'acte même auquel il doit la vie* [HI:152]

Such a vision as a child often adds to the interruptio and transgressive aspects of 'sexuality' as the sexual act and one origin's are difficult to equate. The mother is understood as sexual and represents the surprise of the frenzy of love-making as she is seen in an entirely new light, rather than her normal modest self. Perhaps this analogy can be transferred to a new comer's view of Simon's 'sexuality' and surprise at its very fundamentality.

...femme l'avait *mis au monde* [...] autre femme - et par la même partie de son corps, quoique utilisée, si l'on peut se permettre cette expression, en sens inverse - avait dû en quelque sorte *l'introduire* (le guidant, le faisant pénétrer de sa main maternelle et précise) dans le *monde des adultes*... [HI:271-272]

Sexual initiation, is juxtaposed with birth and death elsewhere. The individual's existence depends on this act but it is striking how many characters find it unconceivable that they can conceive or be conceived. Conception is paradoxical and a kind of scandal because on the one hand it is a pure act and on the other a formation of one's identity. To deny it is to deny the very act out of which one is conceived and also one's origins.

The sexual act is a driving force but along the way it quite often becomes tainted with guilt and this acts as a form of coitus interruptus. Additionally it is a cause of the inability to reconcile one's origins and the sexual act.

PAINTING

Painting through associations becomes based in aggression with correlatives of hair, the penis and spears

...lance rouge tendue pointée en avant de lui oreille qui le pinceau avançant toujours vers la droite bavant un peu parfois le trait épais rouge clair s'allongeant encore l'espèce de boule de coeur triangulaire au bout gonflé poussant forçant se frayant un passage s'enfonçant ... [BP:86-87]

There is much description of painting in this text and it is a generator in itself of 'sexuality'. Here the paint drop on the brush is entirely connotative of the penis and of course the weapons described.

lance pointée en avant luisante le pinceau trop chargé de peinture bavant [...] le nuque de cheveux jaunes [...] quand il s'enfonce de nouveau en [BP:176]

Language becomes associated with painting:

Oh arrête [BP:28]

The paint on the paintbrush has been described in an orgasmic manner and suddenly the above is said, as if the orgasm and the concomitant pain and pleasure is too much to bear.

THE POWER OF THE PHALLUS

The sexual act is shown to be entirely natural and this evolves very directly out of the eternal play at work and additionally by representing the phallus as forceful and this force as a type of *cosmological aggression*:

...l'obscur, aveugle, et fécond va-et-vient de cette infatigable navette fourrageant depuis le commencement des temps dans le ténébreux, broussailleux et secret vestibule de ce tabernacle qu'est le doux ventre des femmes ...[HE:131]

Here the *vegetal motif*, the eternal nature of the sexual act and its mystery combine, to show 'sexuality' as the cause of and prime motivation of life - reproduction.

The *phallus is powerful and the root of all motivation* - this contributes to the mystery and the eternal order of 'sexuality'. Simon stresses the depersonalization in sex. Man is not to be identified with the organ of pain and pleasure, but it shows him a lot. It is an act to which the man turns often because he is a servant rather than master of his sexual organ, itself termed a 'Cyclops' and a 'Blinded Orion'. This does not deny that 'woman' is more often the passive recipient as the orgasm is beyond

man's control and not his to dominate. Thus it defines the roles attributed men and women biologically:

...culte à la fois primitif et barbare : l'ancêtre, le vénérable grand-père du monde, l'antique et vieux phallus décoré de guirlandes, dressé, monstrueux, solitaire, énorme, avec sa tête aveugle, son oeil aveugle, sa rigidité de pierre (et, dans le fond), des colombes, des offrandes, des bêtes sacrifiées, être écrit - ou décrit - en latin, à l'aide de ces mots latins, et non pas crus, impudiques, mais, semble-t-il spécialement conçus et forgés pour le bronze, les pierres maçonnées des arcs [...] destinées à durer plus longtemps que le temps même [...] récités, ânonnées par les futures générations de cancrs aux doigts tachés d'encre, cherchant, le feu aux joues [...] cherchant les vieux, les indestructibles mots latins [...] les rongé comme si, avec l'encre qui les souille, elles suçaient dans comprendre le lait, le principe, non pas même d'une civilisation, de la poussiéreuse culture aux inutiles et poussiéreux bouquins, mais de la vie même... [HE:129-131]

The above indicates the primal and natural aspect of 'sexuality' which is a life force as much as *milk* sustains life. It illustrates additionally the eternity of the act. Interestingly this emerges from a woman's description. This is similar to a description elsewhere where latin engraved stones are discovered centuries later by shepherds, in overgrown growth and are described as having been traced by fingers on the marble pediment in '*l'herbe folle de la verte Arcadie*'. Interestingly **grass** is at the center of the image.

...vieux paysan analphabète, avaient décidé de faire un professeur du dernier des enfants *nés, issues, jaillis de ce phallus dont elle étaient elles-mêmes issues* et qu'il (Pierre) possédait lui aussi (ou plutôt qui *le possédait, c'est-à-dire vivait, poussait sur lui, se servant de lui*, en quelque sorte à la façon d'un vulgaire terreau, *enfonçant en lui ses racines, y puisant la force de grandir, s'ériger et projeter au dehors sa sementce*, et, à cette seule fin, exigeant non seulement que ce corps - ce terreau - soit nourri, entretenu, soigné, mais encore que le cerveau qui command ce cops pense (et non seulement pour lui-même, mais encore pour sa semence, sa proféniture, sa descendance) aux moyens de paillier la faim, le froid, le sommeil [...] préoccupations excluant par conséquent toute autre qui ne concourrait pas à *pouvoir cet*

unique organe (à tel point que l'on dit >>le<< membre de l'homme, comme s'il n'en existait pas d'autre, ou comme celui-là les résumait, les commandait tous : les bras pour travailler et le nourrir, les jambes pour le porter d'un endroit à un autre), à le pourvoir donc du nécessaire, au besoin le rapt, la guerre, la violence et - d'une façon générale, sinon de règle - la ruse)...
[HE:131-132]

...Et Iglésia raconta que la première fois qu'il l'avait vue [...] qu'il avait mis un moment à s'apercevoir, se rendre compte - envahi alors par une autre sorte de *stupeur*, sentant monter une bouffée de quelque chose d'à la fois *furieux, scandalisé, sauvage* - qu'elle était non seulement une femme mais la femme la plus femme qu'il eût encore jamais vue, même en imagination [...] (parlant d'elle non comme une homme parlée d'une femme qu'il a *possédée, pénétrée*, serrée dans ses bras *gémissante et affolée* ... [RF:131-132]

This shows Corrine to be the supremely desirable woman and that the force a desirable woman exerts is extremely strong and inspires a natural reaction. Also this shows women and men to be equally drowned in the sexual experience.

Il a fallu que j'aie le nez dessus. Mince! [RF:133]

...cherchant les *joues en feu* (la respiration *pressée haletant* de la phrase les participes présents *se succédant, se pressant, s'accumulant, le souffle court, brûlant* [...] relevant le pan de mon vêtement, me troussant, lui dévoilant, lui montrant disant [...] regarde comme je le *membre d'âne dressé douloureux aveugle insupportable* ...[HI:108]

The narrator reads the latin text and in fact is stimulated in doing so. Not unrelated to this however is the notion of the boys in *Triptyque* who gaze at the woman, whether real, in image or not and they begin at times to masturbate as a result. The sexual urge is strong even in adolescence and usually the generator is a woman's image. Additionally there is always a fear of being discovered, which makes this a transgression of the prohibited.

RABBIT

The *rabbit motif* is particularly strong in the dense proliferation of images pertaining to sexual motifs made from this basic figure *in Triptyque*.

The *agony of the dying rabbit and 'sexuality' are correlated:*

...Comme *doué d'une vie indépendante*, le membre de l'homme couché en travers de l'aine commence à bouger, *animé de faibles tressaillements* qui le font d'abord rouler sur le haut de cuisse, puis se gonfle et durcit, s'allongeant par une série *d'infimes saccades*. Entourée par la couronne plissée du prépuce on aperçoit la pointe rose du gland, percé de son *oeil aveugle*. Abandonnant le sein la main vient *brutalement se fourrer* entre les cuisses jointes de la fille où elle cherche à *s'insérer*, *fouageant* dans les *poils*, la fille *sursautant*, *disant Non* assez, retirant sa croupe en arrière d'un *mouvement vif*, se redressant sur ses genoux, tendant un bras vers ses vêtements accrochés à une saillie du tracteur, les deux mains sombres de l'homme rapidement *lancées* se rejoignant au même moment sur ses reins, l'homme imprimant à ses bras un *violent mouvement* latéral qui fait *basculer* la fille sur le côté les deux corps *s'écroulant l'un sur l'autre*, la fille *repoussant* de ses bras tendus les épaules de l'homme, bombant le dos, les mains de l'homme surprise par la soudaineté du mouvement se disjoignant, lâchant prise, la fille appuyée sur son bras droit tendu, repliant la jambe gauche, puis la droite, puis accroupie, les fesses saillantes, et se redressant, les deux mains de l'homme, claires maintenant sur les bas noirs, le *saississant aux chevilles* et, *tirant brutalement*, la *déséquilibrant*, si bien qu'elle s'effondre, *comme fauchée*, à *quatre pattes* au-dessus du buste de l'homme qui profitant de sa position écarte vivement les genoux et *enfouit* sa tête entre les cuisses, sa verge de nouveau

raide et tendue formant à présent avec son ventre un angle aigu, des veines bleuâtre serpentant sous la peau fine du *fourreau*, *les protestations de la fille allant s'affaiblissant*, laissant place peu à peu au bruit de son *souffle qui s'accélère*, *le corps abandonné, immobile, sa croupe seule et ses reins animés de faibles ondulations...* [TR:188-189]

There is no specific mention of the *agony of the dying rabbit* and its *submission to death under the knife of the old woman* here but because of such representations elsewhere this passage can be seen as reflective of such. It parallels the *struggle and submission of the woman* with the struggle of the rabbit who/which give in eventually to the more powerful force of *death and sex* respectively.

The description of the struggle could well be that of the couple in the barn or the couple on the street. Interestingly the image of the man's *hand in her pubic hair* and her pushing him away is similar to that of the old woman using a *sythe to cut down grass and the sythe becomes indirectly related to the phallus, making a connection between sex and death*. Being on all fours in the simian posture recalls the circus, adding a certain humour to the description and the circus is described immediately after this extraction.

...saccades de plus en plus rapides agitent ses reins et un cri étouffé fuse entre les dents serrées de la femme tandis que les deux silhouettes *accolées se raidissent dans un spasme*. Un moment encore elles *restent enlacées*, puis celle de l'homme *glisse* sur la gauche, *se détache*, fait de côté quelques pas titubants et malgré les efforts de la femme pour le retenir, roule sur le trottoir, la femme, entraînée par la chute, à *quatre pattes* maintenant au-dessus de lui, les cuisses *dénudées* par la jupe relevée *luisant comme deux ventres de poissons*, le membre de l'homme encore raidi et couronné d'une fraise rouge étrangement *blanc* aussi, dardé hors de la braguette du pantalon. La femme parvient la première à se relever et cherche à remettre sur pied son compagnon qui *se cramponne farouchement* à elle, marmonnant un flot de jurons, *oscille* et partant brusquement de côté *comme un crabe*, le couple trébuche et s'étale de nouveau la boue... [TR:61]

This combines episodes of the rabbit, circus, couple on street and movie. The rabbit generates the movement of 'sexuality' which moves to couple on the street, who are engaged in a struggle and the couple in the barn who are filmed. All three are associated and additionally the other

animal imagery employed serves to underline their animal movements which takes one back again to the image of the rabbit. In the background to the couple there is a movie and one can hear the music which is associated with that which would accompany the movements of a clown in a circus. Again 'sexuality' is set in comic relief, as their movements are paralleled. The text then proceeds to describe the music as that which would accompany love scenes, even though the scene between the man and the woman [in the film] who was lying on the bed (possibly Corrine) makes this rather unlikely. This illustrates the combinations of motifs and seemingly distinct episodes which merge and at times become indistinctive showing innumerable possibilities of combinations through language.

BIRD/RABBIT/SEX

...*ailes noires déployées*, presque *immobiles*, elles semblent tourner au-dessus d'un point fixe, peut-être quelque charogne, quelque mulot ou quelque *lapin agonisant dans un fourré* ...[TR:53]

Bird's wings have been equated with *arrows* and each become correlative with the *phallus*. The dying rabbit's movements are equated with the awkward and frightened woman's and are also here noticeably similar to the narrator in *La Route des Flandres* hiding in the ditch, thus recalling the life and death instinct and the sexual associations which arise out of the ditch frame.

EQUESTRIAN

The *equestrian and horse-woman motif* is very important in establishing the link between 'sexuality', death and life.

The *barn* acts as a framework in the notion of '*woman*' as a *conquerable object and even spoil of war* but additionally establishes the *timelessness of war and sexual conquest*:

le *cavalier le conquérant* botté venu chercher au fond de la nuit au fond du temps *séduire enlever la lillial princesse* [RF:252]

Because of the knight and princess legendary notion the eternal situation of seduction is stressed and '*woman*' being described as '*lillial*' stresses her delicacy and vulnerability.

...groupe médiéval, chatoyant au loin [...] s'avançant pour ainsi dire *au fond des âges*, sur les *prairies des batailles éclatantes* où dans l'espace d'un étincelant après-midi, *d'une charge, d'une galopade, se perdaient ou se gagnaient des royaumes et la main des princesses...* [RF:144]

This is a similar description of the steeplechase where de Reixach battles (through horses) to win Corrine. 'Woman' becomes game. Here the connection is made explicit between sexual prowess, battle and women.

SUFFERING/PASSION

Suffering, passion and infidelity are inevitable partners in the Simonian concept of 'sexuality' and they are connected with transgression. These combine to contribute to the symbiosis between life and death which underpins so very much of Simon's 'sexuality'.

Marriage, Suffering, Infidelity

Marriage in La Route des Flandres is shown to be socially and monetarily based, a *business based more upon sex than love* and mostly it exists in symbiosis with jealousy and loneliness. The implication is there often between *suicide, jealousy and infidelity*:

...Seulement vierge, il y avait belle lurette qu'elle ne l'était plus, mais je suppose que ce n'était pas cela qu'il lui demandait espérait d'elle le jour il avait décidé de l'épouser, sachant sans doute parfaitement dès ce moment ce qui l'attendait, ayant accepté par avance ayant assumé ayant par avance consommé si l'on peut dire cette *Passion*, avec cette différence que le lieu le centre l'autel n'en était pas une colline chauve, mais ce suave et tendre et vertigineux et broussailleux et secret repli de chair [...] Mais après tout n'y avait-il pas aussi une putain là-bas [...] à supposer qu'il lui ait jamais demandé de se repentir ou du moins attendu espéré qu'elle le fît qu'elle devînt autre chose que ce qu'elle avait la réputation d'être et donc attendu de ce mariage autre chose que ce qui devait logiquement s'en suivre, prévoyant même peut-être ou du moins ayant peut-être envisagé jusqu'à cette ultime conséquence ou plutôt conclusion, ce suicide que la guerre lui donnait l'occasion de perpétrer d'une façon élégante [...] profitant en

quelque sorte avec discrétion et opportunité de l'occasion offerte pour en finir avec ce qui n'aurait jamais dû commencer quatre ans auparavant ...[RF:14]

Marriage is based on the primal instinct and the common link of women in Simon 's novels is suicide. They either actively or indirectly cause this. Suicide is never directly said to be the cause of men dying, but the fact that war is implemented does often give rise to speculation. Women are related to war in this way, but never actively. Adultery is shown to lead to unnatural death just as Marie's death is shown as the monstrous culmination of 'unnatural' abstinence. De Reixach is presumed to have committed suicide because of Corrine's adultery and in *Histoire* Charles's wife (this is suggested only) is presumed to have killed herself because of his adultery.

Infidelity is a common link between the women of all the texts. Images of Corrine deceiving her husband permeate *La Route des Flandres*, *Histoire* and *La Bataille de Pharsale*. Additionally all through the text of *La Bataille de Pharsale* there is the statement of '*je souffrais comme*' which is related to jealousy and suffering.

Infidelity is often obsessional as the narrator of *La Bataille de Pharsale* is haunted by his lover's betrayal and hurts his fist banging the door down to find evidence of betrayal. This image is expanded and contracted at various stages of the novel. The narrator is unsuccessful in dealing with the situation and its message that physical union is momentary and the heart is indeed inconstant.

This is a constant theme as the newlywed husband of *Triptyque* sleeps with the bar-girl and returns to his tearful bride of his bachelor party. Additionally the narrator of *Histoire* laments the loss of love between he and Hélène. They have separated and Hélène's image and the suffering she has caused him permeate the novel from beginning to end. However idyllic their union appeared at first the narrator soon recognized their unalterable separateness. Eventually all partners are betrayed and can only resolve themselves to decay.

...un caprice (d'un besoin) [...] qui l'avait amené à épouser une jeune fille d'environ la moitié de son âge dont un caprice de l'avait amené à [...] engager un jockey dont le caprice de la jeune femme ou plutôt un caprice de la chair de la jeune femme ...[RF:286]

Everyone is subject to whims of the flesh, men and women alike. Marriage based on 'sexuality' and therefore is subject to infidelity.

Mourir d'amour? [...] Ça n'existe pas. Seulement dans les livres [RF:123]

Love is sexually based, not romantically inclined.

Ça s'enterre! [TR:134]

This phrase is repeated about marriage at the bachelor party throughout the text at various stages.

lui pour qui *la passion ou plutôt la souffrance* avait la forme non d'un de ses semblables de ses égaux mais d'un jockey à la tête de polichinelle [RF:117]

Passion is qualified and infidelity is shown as cause of suffering. This is extracted from the men fabricating about the ancestor.

le poing *frappant*, et elle *criant* : >>Voilà<< [...] la *porte étendue voler en éclats sous les furieux assauts d'un homme* [RF:187]

Infidelity is shown to be natural

...qui en avait profité pour *fourniquer*, elle, *de la façon la plus naturelle, c'est-à-dire comme cela se fait depuis le commencement du monde*, avec simplement pour partenaire [...] un *garçon pourvu de reins solide...* [RF:188]

The naturalness of the sexual quest extends to marriage, so infidelity is brought down to a biological urge, for men and women and infidelity itself is timeless.

l'instinct, la ruse qui n'a pas besoin d'attendre [...] sans cesser de penser (le corps), de calculer, d'organiser, [...] toujours le corps, les muscles, pas le cerveau [RF:186]

Stress is placed on the ancestor's wife who has been in with her lover and attempts to cover this up while she is still asleep. The suggestion is that such actions are second nature to a woman and she works through and with her body, rather than through intellect.

TRANSMUTATION

Transmutation is an integral part of 'sexuality'. Mankind's persistent attempts to escape the persistent pursuit of time also emphasizes the brevity of his life-span against the enduring presence of nature. 'Sexuality' is a biting way to show the inescapable defeat of time. The horse has been seen to be central to this motif.

...hommes et nature étant dans tout le vaste paysage qui se découvre, étroitement imbriqués. et, dirait-on, appartenant à un *même règne où végétal, l'animal et le minéral seraient confondus* ...[BP:113]

Man is like all else subject to decay in time and part of the cyclical generation of all things. This contributes to the strong awareness of time in the sexual act and of course is heightened in the tenuousness of war. Time is of course an integral part of sexual act.

Man's sex too is subject to decay

fragile sexe [RF:83]

attributs aujourd'hui pendouillants et ridés de sa *défunte* virilité maintenant cachés inutiles sous la braguette d'alpaga *jauni* fripé de son pantalon [HI:52]

Time is a very essential element in 'sexuality'

l'immuable et irréversible acheminement vers la mort qui constitue la trame même de toute tragédie, de tout vie, quel qu'en soient les épisodes glorieux, burlesques ou monotones [HE:23]

Death is conclusive.⁹

corps de plus en plus érodés par le temps [HE:67]

l'incohérente, nonchalant, impersonnel et destructeur travail du temps. [RF:295]

GRASS

Grass is fundamental to the symbiosis of life and death and plays a large part in this fundamental aspect of Simon's 'sexuality'. It can be seen as a drug, an intoxication and is fundamental to the imagery based on life and death.

It is interesting that Louise finally reaches some order whilst lying close to **grass** - which has been integrated into the language to represent 'sexuality', but Louise in fact rejects 'sexuality'.

At the end she is no longer frightened but accepts her role in the life-cycle. Various languages spoken or not have brought her in contact with 'sexuality', disguise and deceit and mankind's mortality. With the extinction at the end of the individual voice and nature's predominance, Louise acknowledges her limitations and other's within the natural environment. She like other characters alters her perspective of life. Sabine and Marie as the antitheses of each other in 'sexuality' mark her 'route'. **Grass** has been a metaphorical clutch in indicating *pubic hair* that lies exposed after love-making, and also in marking the world Louise is buried in physically and metaphorically. Finally it represents her discovery of the indifference of nature.

Grass so full of life in *L'Herbe* contrasts in its sensual description of the death and ditch relationship of *La Route des Flandres*. *Life and grass* are placed in symbiosis. Additionally it is central to *vegetation* which is fundamental to 'sexuality' as the subtitle to this thesis establishes.

Finally it is central to the text of *L'Herbe* as central to the image on the jewellery of box of the woman sitting in the **grass** with her dog quite sensually shows. This image is contained within the same image and so on like Russian dolls establishing this image as eternal.

Louise maintenant étendue dans *l'herbe inerte, sans un mouvement, comme morte* [HE:247]

couchée maintenant de tout son long sur le *sol*, adhérant au *sol*, *enfonçant, enfouissant* son visage dans *l'herbe fraîche*, comme pour l'y *imprimer*, respirant longuement l'odeur puissant et âcre *d'herbe et de terre* [HE:254]

Interestingly Simon uses remarkable similarities in his portrayal of male and female 'sexuality' and pleasure. For Louise and Georges it is a return to the womb. This could perhaps signify Simon's failure to fantasize as clearly the originality of female pleasure.

Endnotes

1. Refer to the horse as the center of transmutation and the tomb and womb correlation in the animal and abstract categories. The following extraction establishes this firmly:

la croûte de boue et de poils collés comme s'il sourdait non d'un animal, d'une simple bête abattue, mais d'une inexpiable et sacrilège blessure faite pare les hommes (à la façon dont, dans les légendes, l'eau ou le vin jaillissent de la roche ou d'une montagne frappée d'un bâton) au flanc argileux de la terre '[RF:26-27]

This illustrates the death and life symbiosis, more so because of the next extraction in the main text, which links women and soldiers. That women are correlated with horses, suggests that the horse which is a central figure on the Flanders Road is symbolic of the fountain of life being killed in war. The horse's position is additionally described as if emerging from the birth canal. Thus the dead-horse is as ambivalent a figure as the life-giving and life-taking woman.

2. Noticably on pages 263-265 and 266-268 of *La Bataille de Pharsale* very explicit parallels are made between the horse-riding and battle motif and the copulation association, respectively. Their structures are nearly identical, with a few exceptions and extensions, as a matter of course. These do not demand specific extraction, for their similarity strikes the reader immediately.
3. Evidence this on page 122 of *La Bataille de Pharsale* 'maintenant [...] rien'. Here the text alternates between short descriptions of love-making and the battle scenes and these are only separated by a few pages.
4. As if being on drugs/**grass** is perhaps appropriate in this sense - medicine and alcohol can produce an immobilizing effect, as the conscious mind loses its hold on temporal reality.

5. Perhaps this is indicative of Simon saying his or men's vision of women is limited when dealing with the feminine form and additionally of his non-visionary stand.
6. This notion is especially worked through in *L'Herbe* where there is less emphasis on coitus, and more on displaced 'sexuality'.
7. 'Sexuality' in *Leçon de Choses* must be perceived as denial and submission throughout, as there is one central scene which is based around this more than any other text. Also in this text there is the much language described as compared to the dying rabbit of *Triptyque* thus suggesting the association between the submission of the rabbit to death as to the death-like situation and submission of the woman in the sexual act.
8. Interestingly *Triptyque* is the only text not to draw upon war-proper, even *L'Herbe* does as a background. There is however no lack of aggression on a personal scale, between the boys who grapple and the lovers who grapple.
9. Simon does not deny the practical side of time when he avoids precise narrative tense but on an existential level his approach is different.

CONCLUSION

In terms of the reality of a literary text, the reader is faced with the task of integrating into a meaningful whole an overwhelming number of elements, which perforce exist at a distance from each other. One possible solution as traced in this representation of 'sexuality', is that its assimilative network may be described as successive layers of an ever-widening associative structure - one lexical item, **grass** for instance, generates allusions to a multitude of other textual elements. Simultaneously some of these will generate other allusions to a greater frame of representation. This larger frame being situated in the book as a whole.

In practice, the comprehension of the greater part of this ultimate network is impossible without breaking it down to the most plausible component parts, yet, the perception that the associative networks may be integrated into increasingly more complex structures - in theory - increases the possibility of simultaneously perceiving the whole. To generalize in this way makes Simon's works more homogenous than they really are.

This thesis has attempted to suggest **grass** is a supreme generator. Perhaps it is fallacious to advance a certain generator as supremely generative, especially over such a number of novels, but **grass** does capture so very much practically and cosmologically as expressed in the subtitle to this thesis.

Simon goes back to the *grass-roots* of man's condition, 'sexuality' being a major factor. **Grass** and its wider components is a fundamental image as has been fragmentarily suggested. It is a purveying metaphor at the very least. By the very nature of the language established, Simon need not define his concept of love but, for example, **grass** as a signifier with its infinite varieties gives us numerable possibilities of sense and meaning.

Perhaps it is more efficacious to limit and organize the novel's generative and associative

operations in to the imposition of sub-groups. This act of integrating many of the individual generators, words or 'idées' represents a first step toward a comprehension of the meaning conveyed by those generators and the associations into which they enter.

This thesis has offered an analysis of four areas of language which contribute physically and thematically to the emergent view of 'sexuality' presented in a novelistic style, in keeping with Simon's theoretical views on the objectives of writing, as established in the initial discussion on language and then backed up with a practical analysis pertaining to 'sexuality'. The representation of 'sexuality' emerges as disrupted and fragmented due to the nature of the study. However the nature of 'sexuality' has been established clearly by way of associations set forth and magnetized.

This study is not exhaustive of all the proliferous associative and metaphorical networks, particularly the very abstruse within Simon's texts and therefore the most representative has been highlighted through italics for scrutiny. The techniques used in this thesis could be reproduced for any chosen theme within Simon's myriad of 'idées', generators and networks and give comparable results.

Duffy has written an article where she claims by the very title that she may have misread Simon:

...It could of course be argued that this article has wilfully and maliciously misread Simon. Certainly, it would be a grave and critical error to confound authorial opinion and narrational perspective. Simon cannot readily be dismissed as either sexist or misogynist...¹

Many of Duffy's claims are indeed contentious but establish 'idées' from which a study of women could be furthered. Her approach is indeed plausible but she seems to overlook the importance of Simon's biological positioning and indeed the complexity of his world view and system of language.

Certainly women are attributed no intellect but there is no denial of it. Women also and equally desire 'sexuality' to which Duffy pays little attention. Certainly not all the women submit to

the male order as Louise rises above the station of 'sexuality' into a spiritual realm. It is matriarchal society which holds this family together and indeed contributes to its wealth. Again Duffy is correct when she says women are the objects of cruel satire when they age but this is set from a biological premise. Men are ridiculed too. One may conclude that Simon's representation of women is that of the dominated or domineering 'other' if careful attention is not paid to the biological premise and the narrative structure. While the women are excessively female or reluctantly female, the males are often not entirely 'normal' - Pierre is impotent, Georges a nonachiever, the narrators of *La Bataille de Pharsale* and *Histoire* are trapped within their own obsessions. Indeed the violence Duffy condemns is again not seen within its existential and cosmological frame of reference. The question of enforced celibacy is seen as freakish by men and women alike. Women are presented as extremes but men are type-cast too and ultimately everyone is cast in the same role as part of the cyclical world where man's efforts are minuscule in comparison to nature from the start. Each and everyone of these objections constitutes further study.

This thesis has not debated the 'feminist' issue but if Simon's writing is for or against women. Perhaps Simon can be accused of the denigration of women because of the marginal role attributed to them, but in Simon words are foremost and when writing (and no more so about 'sexuality' in a biological perspective) the words which emerge are conversant with the motifs expounded. 'Woman' is certainly sexually aware and gives in to the sexual force and is naive, she is ambivalent in her types and sexual positioning, but the role attributed men is not entirely rosy. Men too are subject to eternal forces, where man can only be defined as a small part of the cyclical forces and destruction of time. 'Sexuality' is indeed bound in time. Above all, Simon does not write to affirm and extend public and popular belief or wants - he writes as he observes and his view is almost solipsistic and definitely emerges from within biological parameters. What a novelist thinks in 'real' life and the views set forth or implied in novels will always show a network of discrepancies.

Within the confines of this study the representation of 'women' is limited to their sexual positioning within a biological perspective. Inevitably this emerges with a male writer writing from a male perspective, that is, more attention is devoted to women's bodies than men's - the fascination with the 'other' sexually. In *L'Herbe* when Simon writes from a woman's

perspective it is a formidable attempt and he does in fact again capture archetypal concerns and beliefs. So while delineating aspects of language in Simon's fiction, the study has investigated themes and situations where text conjoins similarities and opposites involving 'sexuality'.

At the level of linguistic structures it would take an army of readers, computers, and linguists to establish with any certainty whether and/or how 'sexuality' is inscribed in linguistic structures and what the objective differences are between masculine and feminine modes of expression. Should the differences be discovered, one would still have to deal with questions, are these natural, cultural or inextricably symbiotic? This study establishes its point on the basis of the categories extracted and the distinction of male and female principles.

What Simon says may of course not be an incredible revelation, but most importantly it is the form he uses that is admirable - he investigates, researches and develops a new style which has no projected reality and he rejects old schools of writing. He does not hope to achieve conclusions, indeed he does not even use his novels to suggest conclusions. Their infinite possibilities of extensions and constant frustration in knowledge merely 'suggest' as he writes. Simon's writing is at the very least thought provoking but his crowning achievement is the exciting concept that the reader can be lead to creativity by using Simon's format to its logical conclusions, to create further associations from the words and metaphors, used not to be defined and limited by the writers ideas only.

The novels are wrought with doubt, typical of the 'Nouveau Roman', a risky classification as Simon himself denies belonging to any group. This classification does suggest a movement which induces the reader to recognize that words are not safe and that literature is a quest, not discovery, just as Corrine's body is.

These are stunning texts for those embarking upon a discovery of this genre and a new insight into the nature of reading, with its multiple options of variations and representations of the world about us. The reader loses his virginity in a textual rather than sexual way, whereby he undergoes an initiation into the value or lack of value of words and experiences a loss of absolute faith in the book. The process of fiction and themes reflect each other, but this reeducation is indeed not pointless, for the reader has adopted a manner of reading, opposite

that the Autodidact in Sartre's *La Nausée* and taken part in the building of the text. Reading has become a positive investigation and not simply a passive assimilation of its meaning.

As a pebble thrown into water this study of 'sexuality' can be seen as the once smooth water distorting the reflection of a whole into a myriad of images which eventually settle back into place and now create a more complete picture because of the understanding gained of the component parts.

Endnotes

1. Duffy: (Mis)reading Claude Simon p238.

Bibliography

NOVELS

- SIMON, C. : La Route des Flandres. Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1960.
295 p
- SIMON, C. : La Bataille de Pharsale. Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1969.
271 p
- SIMON, C. : Histoire. Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1967.
402 p
- SIMON, C. : Triptyque. Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1973.
225 p
- SIMON, C. : L'Herbe. Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1958.
262 p
- SIMON, C. : Leçon de Choses. Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1975.
182 p

BOOKS

- BATAILLE, G.: Death and Sensuality : A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo. Arno Press, New York.
278p.
- SIMON, C.: La Fiction Mot a Mot In Nouveau Rauran: hier, aujourd'hui. Tome II. Pratiques.
Union Generale d'Editions. pp 73 - 97, 1972.

ARTICLES

- DUFFY, J. : M(i)sreading Claude Simon: A Partial Analysis Vol XXIII, No.3. July 1982, pp
228-229. Forum for Modern Languages.

FLETCHER, J. : Erotisme et creation ou la mort en sursis. No.31, 1972, pp 131-140.

RAYMOND, J.: Les Signes de l'eros. No.31, 1972, pp 121-129. Entretiens.